Cambridgeshire County Council

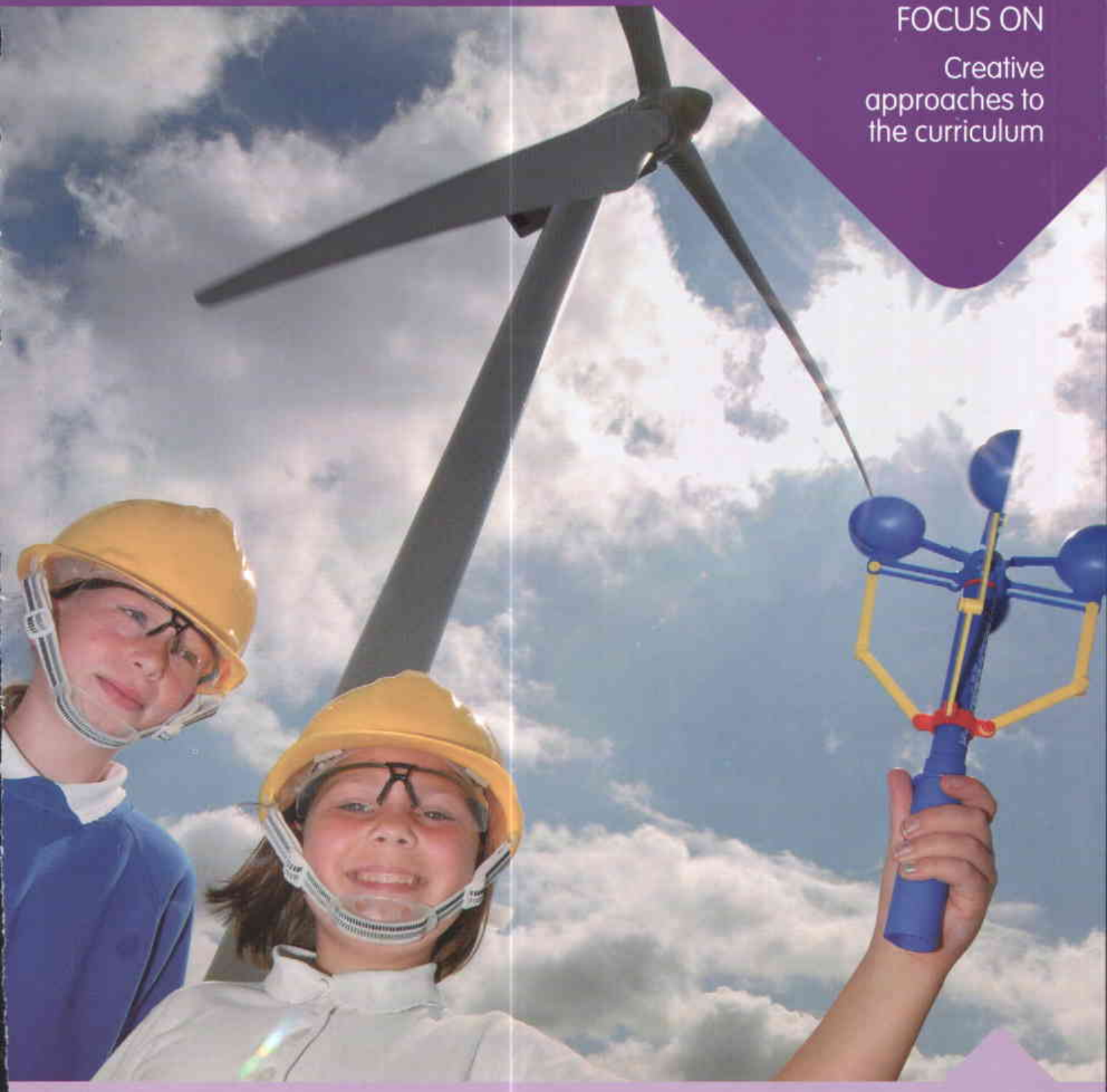
LEARNING TOGETHER

The termly magazine for school staff and Governors

Late Summer 2010 • Issue 27

FOCUS ON

Creative approaches to the curriculum



www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/learningtogether

DEAR READERS...

Schools in Cambridgeshire are best placed to determine their own future arrangements. As I have repeatedly stated I am in awe of the contribution made by Governing Bodies and their commitment to the well-being of children, the success of their school and the wider contribution to the community. I have always believed that the elected representatives in Parliament and the County Council are entitled to set out their clear expectations and aspirations for learners and for schools. In so doing care should be taken to consult with the wider community, with staff and with children and young people. Schools should then be free to meet that expectation by pursuing their own collective professional judgement. Over the decades of my involvement in education there has been far too much process advice based on far too flimsy an evidence base.

As a firm advocate for the local management of schools I have always been philosophically attracted to the freedoms associated with academies. I would be surprised if any of our outstanding schools were not giving serious consideration to the opportunity being presented in the Academies Bill currently before Parliament. I have never understood why these freedoms could not be earned by all establishments rather than gifted to schools previously in difficulty. It will, of course, be best practice when considering Academy status to consult widely and formally. It is too important a decision to be left to a governing body alone. Of course I believe that lean local authorities such as Cambridgeshire have long since ceased to interfere in the professional judgments made in schools regarding the most effective ways of raising achievement and improving outcomes. It is surely paradoxical that the freedoms on offer are from national prescription not from local authority control. I struggle to identify areas where the local authority controls or exerts undue influence in the life of good and outstanding schools. Indeed I would be extremely grateful to governors or colleagues who could identify any control which they believe is restrictive and unnecessary. No doubt there would be occasions when the service which we do provide could be improved and we would all like to have available increased resources. That, however, is surely not the same thing as control.

I would like to see Cambridgeshire evolve its relationship with local schools to bring all the advantages of academy status that it is within our power to provide. Then, those that wish the national freedoms can, when the time is right, apply to the Secretary of State to go that one step further. Even then I would expect that the very welcome trend toward schools working increasingly effectively in partnership will continue and not be affected by changes in school status. I have concerns over the lack of information that is currently available on the implications of academy status particularly in respect of finance and transferring responsibilities. I look to DfE to provide much more transparent information to allow any school to make an informed judgment as to the benefits and risks of academy status. Colleagues are doing the best they can with limited information to assess financial implications of academy status for both schools and the local authority. The local authority will make services available to academies on a traded basis but schools will need to make a judgment as to the implications of taking on responsibility for areas such as redundancy and non statement support for learning when considering academy status.

In my remaining weeks in Cambridgeshire I look forward to hearing from you on these challenging and complex matters. I have no doubt that in considering them you will, as ever, put the interests of the children in your care first. Over the past five years it has been my privilege to work with you. It has seemed all too brief.

Gordon Jeyes

Executive Director – Children and Young People's Services

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ARTICLES, LETTERS AND PICTURES

We are keen to receive all contributions. Please send them to Paul Ainsworth, Box CC1003, Castle Court, Shire Hall, Cambridge CB3 0AP or email: **paul.ainsworth@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Ideally contributions should not exceed 500 words and much smaller contributions and news items are also welcome. Please include photographs with parental permission to print when possible. We have produced a guidance note for contributors. For a copy please phone Sonia Fresco on 01223 699221 or email: **sonia.fresco@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

The deadline date for the next edition of Learning Together is 17 September 2010.

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Innovative approaches to the curriculum

The theme for this issue of **Learning Together** is **Innovative Approaches** to the **Curriculum** and we have a host of articles showing how schools are doing just that. Here **Nigel Battey, Senior Adviser, Cambridgeshire Advisory Service**, offers an overview.

"The curriculum should be treasured. There should be real pride in 'our' curriculum. Teachers, parents, the wider education community, the employment community, the media and the public at large should all see the curriculum as something that they embrace, support and celebrate. Most of all, young people should relish the opportunity for discovery and achievement that the curriculum offers to them."

Mick Waters, then Director of Curriculum, QCA 2006

The curriculum, and how we organise it, is one of the key drivers towards positive outcomes for children and young people. The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum led by Sir Jim Rose and published in 2009 noted:

"Nothing is more important than the body of essential knowledge, skills and understanding we choose as a nation to pass on to our young people."

Before and since the introduction of a National Curriculum in United Kingdom schools in 1988, schools have been seeking ways of creating curricula that:

- engage all learners
- meet the needs of all learners
- ensure the highest achievement for all

The new Secondary National Curriculum, implemented in 2008 has three key aims. It should enable all young people to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

Innovation is vitally important if we are to 'treasure' the curriculum, to continually challenge ourselves in further developing curricula that can truly meet the needs of all children and young people within diverse communities.

Good curriculum innovation is centred on the needs of the learner. It considers overarching questions, such as:

- What are we hoping to achieve?
- How will we organise it?
- How well are we achieving our aims?

It might look at one of, or a combination of, the following key questions:

When?
Ensuring curriculum time is allocated flexibly according to learning need.

What?
Where learning activities are selected to maximise learners' progress.

How?
Appropriate methods and approaches fit the needs of learners and the ways in which children and young people learn.

Who?
Ensuring that all those involved in curriculum delivery provide effective learning experiences.

Where?
Learning takes place in a range of contexts and settings, not just the classroom.

Research suggests that innovation in itself will not necessarily maximise the impact of the curriculum; it is as much to do with how the innovation is organised. The 2008 Ofsted report 'Curriculum Innovation in Schools' looked into factors that contributed to effective curriculum innovation.

In particular it noted that the most successful schools:

- went through a systematic process of investigation, consultation, planning and evaluation;
- had confident, persuasive and visionary leadership, from the Headteacher and other senior and middle leaders;
- had a committed, collaborative and well trained workforce;
- could evidence the impact of the innovation.

Cambridgeshire Local Authority and schools have often been at the forefront of curriculum development. This issue showcases some of the effective curriculum innovation that is making a difference on a daily basis to outcomes for children and young people in Cambridgeshire schools.

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Doing the right thing

A one day early childhood education conference took place in Cambridge on 8 May. A group of 100 educators and professionals interested in exploring outdoor learning environments with young children met to ask:

- What does doing the right thing mean in practice?
- How can we translate the fine words in our documents and vision statements to actual practice in our settings?
- What really happens when we seek to support children's ideas and collaborate with other professionals?

At the end of the day, delegates reflected on their learning and new resolve:

- Educators need educating to allow time and space.
- The most useful part of the conference to me was renewal. I had been bogged down by bureaucracy and started to lose sight of children. Back in my workplace, I will expand my outside environment and make it less tame.
- I think that children need to be trusted by adults to lead their own learning and that educators need to support and extend their thinking, thus enabling them freedom to develop.
- I think that educators have over-listened to the government and under listened to their hearts.
- Back in my workplace I may start a revolution!

The day began with an exploration of 'good companionship' from Robin Duckett (Director of Sightlines Initiative) and Dorothy Gregory (former Headteacher of Walkergate Children's Centre). Helen Moylett, Senior Director (Early Years) of National Strategies, picked up the threads of this as she reviewed the EYFS key principles.

These talks explored:

- The importance of building relationships between educators, children, families, each other and with the world.
- How to take responsibility for creating environments that support these relationships.
- The need to cultivate creativity and curiosity in ourselves.
- The significance of meeting children where they are and supporting their questions.

Workshops were arranged in two separate but interconnected strands, *Finding a Way* and *Good Companionship*. In *Which Way do we go?*, Deb Wilenski reflected on the experience of journeying with children in the wild, wide world, exploring the big ideas of time, space and natural engagement. *Stories from the Garden of Curiosity* meanwhile focused on work carried out at two village Primary Schools in Harwich and their dynamic outdoor learning environment that offers a space to play, grow, dig and imagine. *Learning to Listen* looked in further detail at the research carried out by the Walkergate Children's Centre staff whilst *Building a Learning Community* reflected on the Forest Explorers project run by North Cambridge Children's Centre with CCI (Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination).

Key memories of the workshops shared at the plenary session:

- I was struck by how the group took only rugs, food and water as they ventured into the woods. This enabled an openness and meant they could act in the moment.
- I will remember being asked 'Where do we dare to go?', 'What does adventure taste like?'.
- The teachers talked about how they now brought more of themselves into the classroom. They had learnt to say yes more.
- The adults learnt to put aside their own plans. They sought to lift the threshold on what was allowed. They tried not to name things but to let the children explore.

Helen Moylett, added that the conference had enabled us as a group to create something really substantial during the day: *We have been working with curiosity and imagination to connect ideas, make meaning, tell stories, to meet and listen together. This has helped me be a better learner today. It would be amazingly powerful if we can do this for our children.*

For more information

on the conference can be found at:
www.cambridgecandi.org.uk

The conference was organised by Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination (**www.cambridgecandi.org.uk**), Sightlines Initiative (**www.sightlines-initiative.com**) and Refocus Cambridge.

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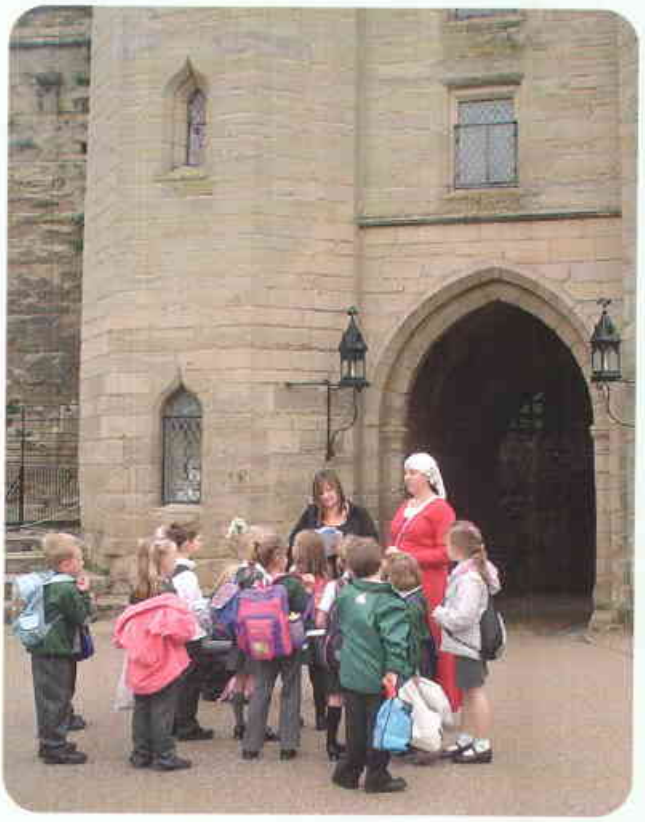
From spectacular starts to exciting endings

Since Autumn 2008, **Yaxley Infants School** has embarked on a new approach to achieving high standards through creativity. **Headteacher Belinda Ourtilbour** explained to the editor the steps she and her staff have been taking.

Belinda told me that the school had adopted for KS1 the Creative Learning Journey (www.creativelearningjourney.org.uk) which is an imaginative curriculum identifying individual skills with planning and pupil assessment and based around the six areas of learning. This involved the staff as a group asking themselves why they wanted to change, what they wanted to achieve, what it would be like and how they would inspire. The answer to the last was termly projects with Tantalising Titles, Spectacular Starts and Exciting Endings.



The first project was Curious Castles. The dramatic start was an unexpected visit to the school by one of the king's knights who said he needed the children's help. This was followed by a whole-school trip to Warwick Castle for a full day of investigative work, interspersed with a lot of drama. The exciting ending featured a request to the children from the Castle baker for help in preparing the king's banquet because his oven had broken – something they threw themselves into with great enthusiasm.

This first venture was carefully reviewed against the intended achievements. All were agreed that it had been motivating for the children and had built their confidence; boys had been especially engaged. It also created good links across year groups. On the other hand, organisation had taken a lot of time and differentiation had to be carefully planned.

Fairy Tales was the next theme, the start being a brilliant performance of Tattercoats by a theatre group, who also worked with the children on dance, an area the school had wanted to develop. A kite-making sub-theme enabled lots of DT work to be done.

Environmental Extravaganzas featured trips to Ramsey Heights and a butterfly park, while Ocean Commotion centred on a visit to Hunstanton Sealife Centre (with a Punch and Judy Show as the exciting ending). This spring term the children explored Nursery Crimes, starting with an excellent day at Cambridge Folk Museum; they organised activities around nursery rhymes where unfortunate events happen such as Humpty Dumpty and Little Bo Peep. Later the police visited the school to talk about detective work. Older children looked into the meanings of nursery rhymes (did you know Ba Ba Black Sheep is about tax evasion?). They looked at toys old and new, made a toy museum and also created their own rhymes.

Yaxley Infant School

Achieving High Standards through Creativity.

The current project is 'To Infinity and Beyond', starting spectacularly with a theatre production called Waste Watchers, starring Evil Lord Sloppy Rot who lives on a planet far away and wants us to ruin ours. The combination of outer space and recycling has certainly captured the children's imagination. A visit to the Space Centre near Leicester will provide the exciting ending.

Allied to this has been the school's desire to smooth out the transition from Foundation Stage to Year 1, combining the good practice in the former with the rigour and challenge of the curriculum in the latter. A new colleague had spent time at the Early Excellence Centre Huddersfield and introduced the concept of zoning. Year 1's two classrooms now have five zones – imagination, construction, maths, literacy and creative. This is working well, especially in terms of putting children more in charge of their own learning, and is likely to be extended to Year 2.

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Why do we want to change?

- Because there is too much curriculum content
- To make it more enjoyable for both children and staff
- So the children can be more involved in their learning
- We want learning to be more pupil led
- It is currently prescriptive and driven by QCA schemes
- We want to make it more relevant and make the links explicit through more of a cross curricular approach
- We want to meet the needs and interests of all children... boys and all groups
- We want to take account of the different ways in which children learn.

What do we want to achieve?

We want children in our school who:

- enjoy learning
- are inspired, confident, independent, motivated and engaged
- will be able to operate as good citizens
- have a high self esteem
- learn from hands on experience
- are enabled to influence through strong pupil voice
- can access all learning
- understand and learn from and within the community
- can develop skills across the curriculum and in different contexts.

What will it look like?

- Less behavioural difficulties
- Environment will be richer
- There will be an accurate record of skills development
- Better teamwork
- Greater pupil autonomy and choice
- We will have a strong structure and sense of direction
- Levels of attainment will be higher

How will we inspire?

- Tantalising titles
- Spectacular starts
- Exciting endings

Building up to a solution

For some time now, the County Council's policy has been that new primary schools should be single-storey. Recent events have necessitated a rethink on this and **Alison Cook, School Planning Officer**, explained the reasons to the editor.

Pressure has been growing, especially in the Cambridge area, for sufficient school places to serve both housing growth and the existing population. Consequently some existing primary schools will expand whilst some new schools in development areas will be designed to have 630 places from the outset (against a previous maximum of 420). Schools of this size, if built single-storey, would obviously occupy very large plots, raising issues not just about cost but, for instance, the difficulty getting round such sprawling, disconnected sites. Some existing schools are located on extremely constrained sites with little scope to expand horizontally and need to look for more inventive solutions, perhaps through building up.

Alison explained that an independent, robust piece of research was felt to be needed and the University of Cambridge was commissioned to do this. As well as a literature review and a survey of experts, the study looked in detail at six schools, here and abroad, where multi-storey issues came into play.

The key findings of the report revolve around the advantages and disadvantages of multi-storey primary school buildings. The advantages include:

- access; building vertically can make available more outdoor space for the school and community
- visibility; having several storeys can better connect the school visually to its neighbourhood
- cost; less surface area can reduce this
- security; the compactness and need for fewer entrances can assist here
- sustainability; again compactness can help energy efficiency
- extended schools; building high can enable provision of offices and other spaces to support Childrens Centres etc.

Perceived disadvantages are:

- access; lack of direct access to the outdoors could cause problems for younger children (though at multi-storey schools visited by the researchers, the youngest children were always on the ground floor)
- staircases; moving around using them can be time-consuming
- parental access – could be hindered by reduced opportunities for contact when collecting children
- scale; may be a tendency towards an institutional atmosphere unless good design and pedagogical solutions are found
- light/ventilation/acoustics – some challenges here
- cost; foundations can be costly as can aspects of access and maintenance.

The report did not favour any particular design solution but did suggest what factors need to be considered for each site in terms of pedagogy, size and scale, ease of access, quality of environments, inclusion and sustainability. On the first of these, the report notes that recent reviews of the primary curriculum have all indicated the desirability of shift towards a greater variety of learning and teaching formats and place emphasis on cross-curricular learning as well as learning outside the classroom. Building design can be a key factor here.

The Children and Young People's Policy Development Group has considered the report and agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that the Council change its policy to accept that multi-storey schools can be provided, **where appropriate**, taking account of the overall development context and site constraints. Cabinet will discuss this in July.

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Free choice pays dividends

Swaffham Bulbeck C of E Primary School took the bold decision to invite every child from years 1 to 6 to study a subject of their own choosing. **Headteacher Donna Cornwell** told the editor more.

Donna explained that the impetus for the project came from Personalised Learning and the need to ensure more relevance and engagement for the children. Two years ago every pupil was offered the chance to choose to learn about something which they either weren't being taught about or they wanted to cover in more detail. On Move Up day they were given a chart on which to indicate what they wanted to learn and how they would like to learn about it. Donna then had the tricky task of finding ways of meeting the wide variety of requests. First time out she was only defeated by "How Computer Games are Made" though for a similar request this year she has been able to enlist assistance from the Education ICT Service.

The preferred learning methods in most cases are visits or experts coming into school. So, for those children who chose Fashion Design as a topic, a visit to Anglia Ruskin University was arranged where lecturer Mick Gower kindly put on a special day of events and activities. There will be another trip to the University this year to learn about Arts, including spending time with art students. Cambridge Regional College were able to cover the topic "how an engine works" through a visit to their workshop (which inspired at least one child to say "I want to go to College").

Other topics chosen included:

- playing a musical instrument (one result of which is a Drumming Club in the school)
- the army (with a trip to Waterbeach Barracks)
- theatre (a group was given a backstage tour after watching the Panto at Bury St Edmunds)
- football (a behind-the-scenes tour of Ipswich Town FC's stadium)
- animals (with a visit to Wood Green Animal Shelter).

How did the school manage to fund all this activity? Some personalised learning funding was available but in the end Donna only had to use three to four hundred pounds of this. Most visiting experts happily provided their services free and many trips also waved any charges. There's a lot of goodwill out there.

Before each visit or trip, the children plan what they want to find out and what questions they need to ask. Afterwards they write up the project before making a presentation to the rest of the school in assembly.

Donna feels that the benefits have been huge. Children are generally in mixed age groups and they gel because of the common interest. Other skills they develop are around research, teamwork and presentation. Echoing comments in other articles in this issue, Donna is sure that it's the sense of purpose which really engages the attention and interest of children.

The project is nearing the end of its second year and continues to improve. One lesson already learnt is the value of putting more time into the initial preparation. The annual parent survey evoked a very positive response with the general view being that children have been genuinely inspired by the approach. The main challenge for Donna and colleagues is to find ways to meet all the requests and desired learning methods but she feels that the effort is well worth it.

Getting the boys on board

Research has shown that boys experience more difficulty than girls in learning to write, especially in the early years. **Alison Beardon** (Headteacher) and **Pat Yoxen** (Deputy Head) at **Cherry Hinton Infants School** told the editor how they are tackling such under-achievement by stimulating the interest of boys in written work.

Alison and Pat firstly explained the importance of role play activity within the classroom. Children have been given more involvement here. The teacher introduces a given topic then the class makes suggestions about how it could be role-played, with these ideas being taken up as appropriate. A recent example which worked very well was the Bike Shop. Pupils brought in their own bikes and a parent who owns an actual shop supplied equipment. The shop had a manager, mechanics and other staff, bike-related language was used, things were labelled up and real tools used. Because most of the children own bikes, they could relate well to all this activity and it stimulated some really good written work e.g. on how to mend a puncture. Pat felt that, for the boys in particular, the subject being meaningful to them meant they could see the purpose in writing about it.

This experience-based approach has been employed throughout the school. Year 1 visited the grounds of nearby Cherry Hinton Hall and then wrote stories based on what they'd seen and done – simple but effective. Other classes have visited the railway station and behind the scenes at the local Tesco store. The school finds that using situations which children easily relate also works well for those who have English as a second language.

The staff are enthused by the approach and share ideas about what could happen each term, including suggestions for what's likely to engage boys. Pursuing a cross-curricular approach has proved fruitful. Some recent work around vehicles linked in to science (forces, push and pull), history and English, with the children using ICT to find relevant information. A trip to Duxford Aviation Museum helped cement this and included assembling an aeroplane (not a real one I suspect).

The school also uses its outdoor environment and is setting up a KS1 playground with several different zones, such as a digging area, to keep children active and busy. The way this uses up surplus energy is an added advantage.

The upshot of all this is that boys previously disinclined to write are now doing so willingly; researching the facts and writing non-fiction clearly appeals to them – and also to the girls, who are just as interested in things like aeroplanes. Finding topics which appeal to both just hasn't been a problem.

Parents, too, have commented that they have noticed higher levels of engagement in writing from their children, exemplified by the enthusiasm with which they bring in materials for the role play activities.

Pat mentioned an example of how the approach is helping the children work things out for themselves. Problems had begun emerging during football games because of the behaviours of some individuals. With help from Pat, acting as mediator, the children identified where the problems lay, considered possible solutions and came up with some rules and decisions e.g. a short-term ban for poor behaviour. A very mature approach and more evidence that grounding learning in real experience and giving everything a purpose actually works.

Helping farmer Giles

In April, **Elsworth Primary School** ran a very successful **Science Week** using **'Mantle of the Expert'**. **Headteacher Theresa Thornton** told the editor about how it was organised and what it achieved.

Elsworth is part of the Octagon cluster and science subject leaders meet to discuss ways of teaching creative science. The school had held science weeks before but as a result of the discussions decided to try one using the Mantle techniques. The experiences would also inform them in deliberations on their new curriculum.

The scenario for the week was "How Can We Help Farmer Giles?" with each class being asked to assist him in different ways. Reception were told that Farmer Giles would like to keep chickens, had ordered eggs and an incubator, but did not know what to do next. Stage one was to find out what the children already knew about chicks (quite a lot as it happened) thus giving the teacher an assessment base. They then looked at how they could help and where else they could get information. The project was greatly enlivened by Living Eggs (www.livingeggs.co.uk) who provided an actual incubator complete with eggs. Once the chicks hatched the children looked after them until they were ready to move to their longer term homes. Farmer Giles was duly provided with masses of practical experience-based advice and the whole story written up in a lovely big book.

Year 1 were told that the Farmer had found some eggs in a field and didn't know what they were. The class researched away and found them to be snake eggs, for which they made appropriate boxes. They also produced gorgeous books all about British animals.

The task for Year 2 was to find out why the Farmer had holes in his cabbages. Caterpillars turned out to be the culprits so the children investigated friendly ways to remove them such as fixing bird boxes near the vegetable plot.

Year 3/4 were asked to provide advice on root crops the Farmer could grow. Fortunately one parent has a productive allotment which the children visited to pick up ideas. They found, for instance, that parsnips take 9 months to grow so didn't recommend them. The farmer was supplied with a detailed chart showing him what and when to sow and growing and harvesting times. This project linked beautifully with the school's own development of outside planting areas, one for each class. The children also generated a list of questions based on which vegetables sold well and which were the most profitable. Their class teacher took the questions to a market stall holder and the findings were fed back to the children and Farmer Giles.

One of Farmer Giles' fields was in danger of being infested with weeds. Some of Year 4 and 5 decided to research seed dispersal and made information posters based on the types of weeds they were likely to be. They visited the nature reserve to help to find out more about woodland plants. Lastly, some of the Year 5 and 6 children explored methods by which Farmer Giles could clean and transport water to his farmhouse which was situated at the top of a hill. Ideas included using buckets on a pulley system and an Archimedes Screw. The children produced detailed drawings and made working models that were shared with the rest of the school.

Theresa identified a range of positive impacts from all this work. Childrens' confidence was built (helped by them presenting their findings to the whole school in assembly). They learned the importance of asking questions and then refining those questions. Children were encouraged to display their questions which other children then tried to answer. Most important was the complete enjoyment and immersion in learning. The children were given opportunities to shape their thinking and then try out the results – if the ideas worked, great and if they didn't then they were finding out what they'd learnt was just as valuable.

Going global in Barton

For some years now, **Barton C of E Primary School** has placed a strong emphasis on making sure its pupils look well beyond the boundaries of their own community and own country. Taking on the **International Primary Curriculum (IPC)** recently has moved this commitment to a higher plane. **Headteacher Sue Carpenter** told the editor more.

Barton is a small school with 100 pupils and four classes. In recent years, two members of staff have joined who have international backgrounds – Vesna from Bosnia and Milly who is Venezuelan/British. Sue feels that their arrival gave particular impetus to the school developing its international dimension. The British Council International School Award was a good starting point and the intermediate level was gained just over a year ago; work is currently underway on gaining the full award, which involves completing seven international activities during the year, plus a link with a school in another country and production of an international policy.

The school also has links with a Cambridge-based international school which sees Japanese young people making regular visits. There's a link with a teacher training college in South Carolina and also between Class 4 and a school in Arragon, Spain. The Diocese of Ely is helping forge another link, with a church school in Hong Kong. Turning to curriculum issues, the Rose Review prompted Sue and colleagues to examine their own curriculum. At the same time, Sue saw an advert for the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) and received information from them, including a DVD. When she showed this to the staff she said "I've never seen them so animated".

More information about the scheme was gathered, and Governors also became involved. One researched the International Baccalaureate Primary Programme as an alternative but concluded that it didn't offer the same potential as IPC. One issue with IPC was the initial cost but the school fortunately had some funds available on a one-off basis so that barrier was overcome.

IPC is based around thematic units of work, each lasting 4-8 weeks, with a cross-curricular approach and, in each case, a global dimension. The units encourage children to establish connections in their learning so they can see, for instance, that whilst history, geography and science are separate subjects they are also connected in important ways. An example which Sue mentioned was a Year 1/2 project on holidays, based around a virtual trip to Cuba. The children visited the travel agent, came into school with suitcases and passports, went on a simulated journey, enjoyed a slide show of Cuba then "sunbathed" and danced.

Once a theme has been selected, it is introduced through an 'entry point' ideally having a "wow factor" to spark enthusiasm. As an example, the entry point for "Mission to Mars" was to imagine arriving on a desolate planet and having to survive. It happened that snow had fallen on the playground so it was able to double up as a barren landscape for the children to visit.

Next a 'knowledge harvest' takes place where the children brainstorm what they already know about the topic. They are then asked what they particularly want to find out about it. The fun bit – the research and learning – follows. The final stage is an evaluation session, where the children have the opportunity to reflect on the topic and what they have learnt. Other topics which have so far been tackled include New Materials (Years 5/6), Money and Trade (Years 3/4) and Plants and Animals (Years 1/2).

In terms of impact, Sue says that it's still early days as IPC only started in September. However parents report that their children seem more engaged with learning and more eager to talk about what has happened at school – boys especially. Teachers say that because children are writing for a purpose they very much **want** to write. IPC doesn't cover the full range of subjects. Maths and RE are still taught discretely. Literacy is taught through IPC as much as possible but supplemented with more traditional material as need be.

In conclusion, Sue feels that the whole curriculum has enjoyed a change of emphasis. The international dimension is very welcome in a community which is 88% White British. The parental input has also been gratifying.

Barton was the first school in the county to adopt IPC; Histon and Impington Junior has recently taken it on board as well.

For more information

You can find out more at the IPC website:
www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com

www.globalgateway.org.uk for info on International School Award.

Kettlefields' French connection

Taking a class of primary pupils to **France** is not a task to be undertaken lightly but **Kettlefields School's** day trip to **Calais** proved to be a triumph. **Class Teacher Jackie Crisp** explained to the editor why all the hard work was worthwhile.

Squirrels class comprises 27 Year 3 and 4 pupils and their project for last term was France. Jackie had long wanted to take a class there to give children a taste of the country and, in particular, to visit a French school. Headteacher Carol Meek agreed so in December, Jackie and Teaching Assistant Sally Nicholas visited Calais to plan an itinerary for the day. Whilst at the market, they asked about local schools and were directed to the nearly Ecole Saint Pierre; they were enthusiastically received and the school readily agreed to host a visit in March 2010.

Next step was to write to all parents to gauge whether the necessary 100% commitment (and passport availability) would be forthcoming – happily it was. The children now began corresponding with the French class they would be meeting, with each child given a French pen-pal.

Prior to the trip, the children were encouraged to practise speaking French "little and often" both at school and home, which gave them the confidence to try out the language in the real-life situation. They also bought small (and suitably English) presents to give their new friends.

On 18 March, the coach departed at 6.30am and was an exciting event in itself, especially entry into the Channel Tunnel, which the children found awesome ("Like I was in space"). Once in Calais, the market was visited then a Chocolatier to buy gifts for parents, and lastly the visit to the school. This was actually a huge establishment as it caters for 4-18 year olds. The canteen was first stop and the children had to order their food in French. After lunch the French class came to play with them, followed by a classroom session where the children performed a "Piece de Theatre" consisting of French and English songs and poems. The French children responded with a series of plays in French and some English songs. The Kettlefields pupils produced paintings they had created in Monet's style, to audible gasps from their French counterparts. Gifts were exchanged and, after three and a half hours, it was time to go home.

But there was more. On 31 March, parents and guests of the class were invited to a Film Premiere Evening at the school. Everyone dressed up as for a premiere in formal attire and were treated to wine and canapés whilst being entertained by the pupils. After the interval around 85 pupils, parents and guests watched a film of the Calais day followed by a slide show.

Jackie says that the initiative has had many positive impacts in addition to bringing the whole France project alive. It has been a huge confidence builder for the children and also great for team work, as all have been very supportive of each other. They have also improved their language skills. Parents are proud of their childrens' efforts and greatly enjoyed the Premiere evening. As for the children one described it as "the best school trip in the history of school trips" and another as "the best day in my life"!

All are looking forward to the French children visiting Dullingham, hopefully this September.

Offord's whole new approach

The new primary curriculum highlights the importance of children developing their learning and thinking skills through investigation, creativity and making original connections. **Offord Primary School's** whole-school creative curriculum has been delivering such an approach for a couple of years now. The editor got the lowdown from **Deputy Head Ros Amner**.

The whole school curriculum revolves around all of the school tackling the same topic at the same time. It also incorporates a full range of learning styles, including drama, art and research; for the last, the school uses the TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) systems which empowers learners to work independently inside an inclusive school policy and to develop their problem-solving skills. There are regular "collapsed" days and afternoon where children break into cross-age house teams to work on the current topic area. The recent Ofsted report commented that "Pupils benefit considerably from working together on practical activities and in pairs and groups. They greatly enjoy the topic approach and as one pupil said "I enjoy the topics and that the whole school works on the same topic".

The chosen topics have included Pirates, Local Studies, Transport and Superheros. For some topics, whole-school trips are arranged e.g. to the Natural History Museum for Dinosaurs and to the seaside for the Seaside, where pupils compared village life to living in a tourist resort. Most parents get very involved and where they have children at both KS1 and KS2, can undertake a family project. Parents often ask "What are we doing next?"

The staff also enjoy the approach as it means working more closely together, sharing ideas and solutions.

Topics emerge from staff brainstorming sessions. A mind-map exercise with the children follows, to identify what they know, what they want to know and how they want to learn. The actual work is a mixture of the practical, research and activities such as model-making. Attention is of course paid to ensuring that the statutory elements of the curriculum are fully covered as well and being able to do that across the whole school is a bonus. Links are also made between subjects; superheros, for instance, also had a focus on Healthy Living. Parents receive a report on each topic, telling them which skills their children have acquired.

Ros is very clear that the approach is working. The children are more motivated and are keen to follow things up themselves, asking "where do I want to take this now and in the future?". There has been an especially positive impact on writing because, Ros thinks, the children feel they have a vehicle for their efforts – and boys in particular have benefited.

Wheely wonderful waste education

Did you know the Recycling Buses are run by teachers? And they aren't just about recycling either – schools can book them to teach a wide range of skills for the new creative national curriculum.

Inspirational teachers Nick King and Em Ritchie take the buses around the county's schools, introducing children to the wonderful world of waste and the wider environment, through fun hands-on activities. These activities not only build children's' confidence and knowledge of environmental issues, and but they also tick several National Curriculum and Framework for Sustainable Schools' Doorway boxes. By using the things we normally throw away to make models such as aeroplanes, musical instruments and working merry go rounds, children learn about the benefits of reducing, re-using, repairing and recycling.

"We get a chance to work with children of all abilities to inspire them to think about the problems facing our environment and what they can do to help", says Nick. "The buses are key in developing successful learners, creative individuals and responsible citizens to help create a greener future" Em affirms.

The buses are perfect for small group activities, but the bus message spreads wider than that as lessons can be carried out into the classroom or school hall. Thousands of kids have taken something from the bus home with them this year - the wind turbine they might have made, the science behind it, why it's important, and the knowledge of what goes into their recycling bin.

"It is the best example of learning and having fun at the same time" said one bus-goer.

For more information

about how to book a bus visit, contact the Waste Team on **01223 715459** or go to **www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/waste**

The Accredited Clerk

Cambridgeshire Governor Services is offering clerks in Cambridgeshire the opportunity to gain accreditation for the work they do in supporting governing bodies. **The Competency Framework** has been developed by the **ISCG** (Information for School and College Governors). ISCG work nationally in the support of clerking.

This is a highly effective programme and develops the skills and confidence of clerks enabling the governing body to focus on strategic decision making.

Tracy Piesse has been awarded Accreditation with a Merit and has written an article about her experience.

In 2008, after a long career in international advertising, and a 2 year break as a full time mum, I went in search of a flexible and fulfilling role which would fit around the busy lives of my young children. My quest lead me to the Camclerk network and I am now employed as a Camclerk for Hardwick County Primary and also directly appointed as clerk to governors for Crosshall Junior School in St Neots.

The combined and diverse experience gained by working in these two schools (one a community school and the other a foundation school), provides a solid foundation to demonstrate my ability to clerk at the high level necessary to be part of the Camclerk team and to pass the Accredited Clerk Programme. Clerks should be recognised for their key contribution to the governing body and encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities available to them. The Accreditation Programme is a formal qualification which will help to raise the profile of this important role.

The evidence gathering is a lengthy process and I would advise any new students to print and collect information throughout the process. As requirements of the course become clear, you can tailor your work to meet the criteria in the knowledge that you are creating and maintaining a high standard of clerking for your schools. Involve members of the governing body wherever possible to provide witness statements about your work or filing systems.

The course has certainly helped me identify areas for improvement. Items such as a correspondence list (what is the point of that – just another administrative task?) is now an integral and useful part of my filing system. I take more time to consider whether to use more formal language in daily correspondence – would it be viewed as appropriate for a public document?

The most useful training session in my opinion, was the introduction to the Regulations – undertaking the quizzes and researching the answers has increased my knowledge, which I have confidently put to use.

The task of setting up a file of evidence that can be clearly understood by the references and layout has also helped across other areas of responsibility such as compiling the portfolio of financial documentation for FMSiS. It was great to receive a compliment from the assessor!

Overall, I have enjoyed the training programme and the sense of personal and professional achievement, which has been made possible with the support of my two governing bodies. Thanks also to the team at CGS for filling in knowledge gaps however basic!

Clerks interested in finding out more can attend an initial session and formerly register onto the programme.
Clerks will need to have been in post for at least one year.

Course Code	Course	Date	Venue	Time
CA/01	Introduction and Registration	Tues 7 Sep 10	Cambridge Professional Development Centre	10.00am-12.00pm
CA/02	Training Day	Thurs 4 Nov 10	Cambridge Professional Development Centre	10.00am-2.00pm
CA/03	Show and Tell	Wed 8 June 11	Cambridge Professional Development Centre	10.00am-12 30pm

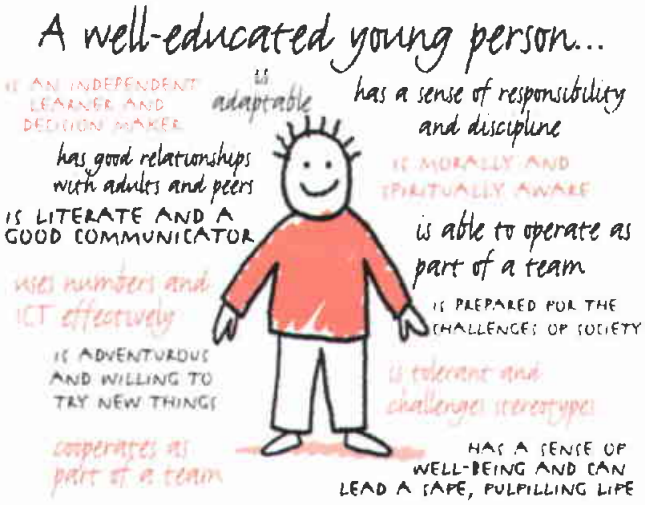
The cost to clerks at subscribing schools is heavily subsidised:

- Schools paying an annual subscription will pay £75 plus £50 per portfolio forwarded for assessment.
- Non-subscribing schools will pay £200 plus £100 per portfolio forwarded for assessment.
- Schools subscribing to Camclerks will not be charged.

For more information

contact Cambridgeshire Governor Services **01223 715322**
Julia.newman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
or access the Education Portal **www.ccceducation.net** Information for Clerks, Resource ID 3941.

Curriculum innovation


A well-educated young person...
is an independent learner and decision maker
is adaptable
has a sense of responsibility and discipline
has good relationships with adults and peers
is literate and a good communicator
is morally and spiritually aware
is able to operate as part of a team
uses numbers and ICT effectively
is prepared for the challenges of society
is adventurous and willing to try new things
is relevant and challenges stereotypes
cooperates as part of a team
has a sense of well-being and can lead a safe, fulfilling life

Schools embarking on curriculum change may find the following ten steps useful:

1. Consider where you're going before you think about how you're going to get there.

- Identify the aims and outcomes of your curriculum.
- Have a clear vision of what you want to achieve.
- What difference will it make?
- Root the innovation in a clear set of values.
- Focus on improving outcomes, providing greater opportunities and raising aspirations for pupils.
- Make a realistic assessment of how far and how fast you can go.

2. Audit current provision, content and structure.

- What areas of strength could be developed further?
- What is going to prevent you from delivering on your aims?
- What are your non-negotiables (Core Essentials)?

3. Research, plunder and critically evaluate a range of curriculum models.

- There are some fantastic, radical and creative models of curriculum design – but remember that what works for one school may not work for yours.

4. Develop a model that is personalised towards the needs of your school and your learners.

- Don't be afraid to think innovatively in terms of how the curriculum can be structured.
- Be radical. Think ' instead of ' not ' extra to '.
- Don't just buy your curriculum off the shelf.
- There is no one model for success because context matters.

5. Consider carefully the social and cultural issues and challenges that the 21st century poses for young people.

- Ensure the curriculum is one for the future not just a slimmed down version of the old one.
- A curriculum that has a strong emphasis on achieving high standards in literacy and numeracy but provides and develops broader skills and qualities – the abilities to think, solve problems, learn, work in teams, be creative and be resilient.

6. Engage with the views of staff, governors, children and parents.

- Give the whole school community a chance to engage with and have ownership of the curriculum design process.

7. Empower your learners through the design process and the learning programmes you implement.

- Provide opportunities for pupils to influence, in creative ways, how the school works.
- Pupils need to be encouraged and provided with opportunities to plan and evaluate their own learning.
- Pupils need to know how to learn and how they learn best.

8. Give license to innovate.

- See this as an opportunity to develop and build creatively upon the good practice of your staff.
- Leaders need to model creative and innovative approaches themselves.
- Develop a professional culture in which innovation and imaginative ideas are shared and celebrated.

9. Start small scale.

- Pilot projects, taking an action research approach.
- Don't try to do too much at once.

10. Map in robust evaluation procedures with a view to moving towards your curriculum vision.

- At all stages time for reflection and celebration should be built in.
- Questions must be asked: Is it working? How well? How do we know? What do we need to do next?

Underpinning all of the above is the quality of leadership at all levels.

David Mills
General Inspector
Standards and Effectiveness (3-11)
david.mills@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Taking the lead at Mayfield

Mayfield Primary School, Cambridge has been running Leadership Days for three years now as a means to enrich the curriculum through enjoyable activities. **Headteacher Jaspaul (Jas) Hill** explained to the editor how it works.

Leadership days take place on Fridays with each year group having such a day twice a term. There are two classes per year group and on the day, one teacher has all 60 children, supported by three teaching assistants, enabling four groups of 15 to work on the projects which comprise the day. The other teacher focuses on his or her particular leadership role within the school, undertaking an activity with a high-ability group in their specialist area. My visit happened to be on a Friday and the teacher concerned was a geography specialist; she was leading a session on the very topical subject of volcanic ash.

Jas took me round the school to see what the four groups of 15 were doing. The focus for the day was on Design and Technology and Food Technology with each group taking turns at each of four activities. At the time of my visit, group one was preparing Anglo Saxon soup (in fact, they'd just finished – it was delicious). Group two were constructing the bases for cars, with group three designing the superstructures for the cars, to be built in due course. The final group was creating jungle paintings drawing inspiration from the famous Rousseau painting of a tiger in the undergrowth.

At the whole-school assemblies on Fridays, the classes involved in the previous Leadership Day share what they did with the rest of the school. Jas told me that this can be quite spontaneous; that morning it was Year 2's turn to feedback and four children readily volunteered to speak (very confidently) about what had happened a full week before. I had the pleasure of visiting a Year 2 group myself and their enthusiasm and enjoyment certainly shone through. They said they liked "the really fun activities" and having "different classes with different teachers". Some said they'd especially enjoyed the recent Victorian Day when they dressed up in period costume, used slates to write on and learned about the very different disciplinary regime in those days! ("if you did anything wrong, you got smacked").

Jas feels that the Days are a great success, not just because they are so obviously relished by the children. The teachers very much appreciate being freed up to concentrate on their leadership role and keep on top of their game – it's quality time for them as well. Definitely a win-win approach.

On-line ...or off course with e-safety

Are we all doing all we can to promote e-safety in school...or are we completely off course? As the **Whittlesey** and **Coates** cluster further matured under the banner of **WhitCo.Nect**, schools had worked together on key strands which supported the development of pupils and schools alike, such as **Community Cohesion** and **Attendance** issues. However, the issue of **e-safety** linked to anti-bullying remained a high priority, which the schools addressed during **Anti-bullying** week last November.

All five schools valued the advantages that on-line resources brought to their pupils such as pupil independence, enhancing children's learning and developing independent skills for the future. But, we were also aware that children and young people needed to have the skills to remain responsible and, above all, safe on-line.

Dr Tanya Byron, Becta and several other educational experts have raised the issue of e-safety, particularly with electronic communications and social networking sites, which can offer parents and schools cause for concern, and can leave pupils open to cyber bullying and vulnerable.

WhitCo.Nect Schools arranged a cluster approach to support each schools work in this area. Working with the Cambridgeshire ICT service, an e-safety day was organised for all schools based on CEOPS 'Know it All' videos, along with open forums which raised the issue of e-safety for pupils. Two sessions, based at Park Lane and Alderman Jacobs Schools were organised, with pupils from New Road joining Alderman Jacob's pupils.

Should you tell a respon-sible adult?
Can You block people?
Do you think you should only be friends with people you know in real life?
Can you only be friends with people you know in real life?
Do You change your mobile number?
Do You Keep your address?
Do you delete the messages?

Pupils enjoyed working together to respond to the day which was led by colleagues from the ICT service. The programme, based on the Cambridgeshire Starz Detectives format, involved Year 5 and 6 pupils responding to bullying issues from one of the cyber-bullying videos. The pupils and staff all felt the day addressed the issues and actually raised more questions for us all. Alderman Jacobs also organised a pupil poster competition, and all schools were invited to enter with posters showcased in all the schools.

We identified the issue of parental understanding as key. Park Lane's school survey identified many pupils, as young as 8 years old, with social networking profiles for example (the age for a Facebook profile is 13 years). A significant number of pupils had unsupervised, internet access with webcams in their bedrooms. A parental meeting was arranged for all schools at Alderman Jacobs School but this was not well attended.

So what's next to keep us 'on-line' with e-safety issues? WhitCo.Nect schools will all still strive to work at e-safety – we have a joint Anti-Bullying Policy, which incorporates e-safety, two schools have staff who have completed EPICT (European Pedagogical ICT licence) training, and Park Lane School has recently had the advantage of Cyber Mentoring training for Year 5 and 6 pupils. These pupils will be ambassadors to promote e-safety for all the pupils.

Are we complacent? Are we confident we have tackled all the issues? Well no, of course not. We are keeping on with addressing the issues, and involving staff, pupils and parents on a frequent basis. Ofsted recently reported that in schools where e-safety was outstanding, "all the staff, including members of the wider workforce, shared responsibility for it". WhitCo.Nect are committed to be 'on-course' with e-safety to protect our pupils.

Val Cameron, Headteacher
Park Lane Primary & Nursery School
Member of Becta's Leading Leaders Network

For more information

Useful links: (there are many more of these)

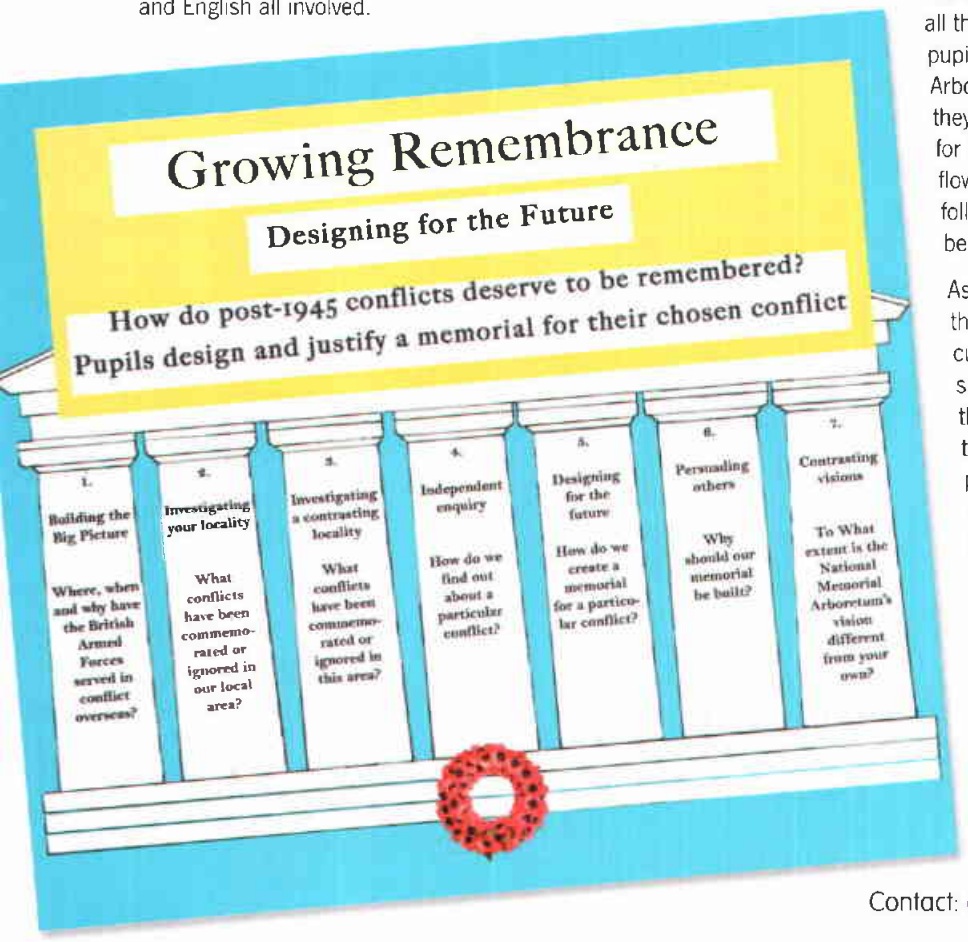
www.becta.org.uk
www.saferinternet.org.uk
www.ceop.gov.uk
www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Growing Remembrance – designing for the future

Growing Remembrance is a Gifted and Talented (G and T) project jointly funded by **Suffolk**, **Cambridgeshire** and **Staffordshire County Councils**. G and T pupils in Year 9 classes are investigating a neglected conflict since 1945 which involved British troops (1960 was the only post-war year with no fatalities). **Andrew Wrenn**, **General Adviser-History**, described the project to the editor.

A school in each authority, (Cottenham Village College in our case) is following an outline scheme of work prepared by advisors which can be adapted to local need. Thus although it has started out from a Gifted and Talented base, Cottenham AST, Geraint Brown has decided to pursue it with a whole-year group aswell.

Key to the project is the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. This is the UK's year round centre of remembrance, visited by 300,000 people a year and home to over 200 monuments to different conflicts. The scheme of work for the children revolves around them designing a memorial for a post-1945 conflict of their choice. Although history-led, this is very much inter-disciplinary work, with the likes of DT, Art, Geography and English all involved.


Growing Remembrance
Designing for the Future
How do post-1945 conflicts deserve to be remembered?
Pupils design and justify a memorial for their chosen conflict
1. Building the Big Picture
Where, when and why have the British Armed Forces served in conflict overseas?
2. Investigating your locality
What conflicts have been commemorated or ignored in our local area?
3. Investigating a contrasting locality
What conflicts have been commemorated or ignored in this area?
4. Independent enquiry
How do we find out about a particular conflict?
5. Designing for the future
How do we create a memorial for a particular conflict?
6. Persuading others
Why should our memorial be built?
7. Contrasting visions
To What extent is the National Memorial Arboretum's vision different from your own?

The students are undertaking two trips as part of their learning and Andrew had recently conducted the first, a tour of memorials in London. These ranged from Cleopatra's Needle, to the various memorials in Whitehall to Hyde Park Corner's tribute to the 7/7 bombing victims. Andrew encouraged the children to think about the impact which each monument had on them, how it was designed and how and why the designs may differ.

Pupils will then start work on memorial design, including the creation of models in D and T. As part of this process they will also watch interviews with Liam O'Connor, designer of the Armed Forces memorial at the Arboretum and its founder, David Childs.

The second trip will be to the Arboretum itself, with all three schools visiting on the same day so that pupils can compare notes. They will look for the Arboretum memorial for their chosen conflict though they may not necessarily find it; the Falklands War for instance is currently only commemorated by flower beds. A "Dragon's Den" style activity will follow, where pupils argue why their design should be chosen.

As a response to the new secondary curriculum the inter-disciplinary planning crosses the curriculum and thinking extends beyond one subject to contribute to personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS). Cottenham are planning to record the process of memorial design by pupils noting down how and why their designs have changed over the weeks devoted to the project. These "snapshots" will help them to reflect on and evaluate the design process once their plan for a memorial has been finalised. Other important elements of the project are the inter-generational feature (pupils will interview veterans from their chosen conflict) and learning outside the curriculum.

Once the project is complete, full details will be placed on the Portal so that other schools can pursue similar exercises in future.

Contact: **andrew.wrenn@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

Learning how to learn with Charles Darwin

Ten Cambridgeshire schools are taking part in the **Darwin Heritage Project**, funded from the sale last year of the **Authority's L.S. Lowry** painting. The editor visited one of the schools, **Spinney Primary** at **Cherry Hinton**, to see how the project was coming along.

I spoke with Emily Garrill and Yolaine Bennet, Year 3 and 4 teachers, who are leading on the project at Spinney. They initially spent two days at Darwin College with colleagues from the other schools, looking at how children can be helped to learn more creatively and how to use different and exciting start points which engage children right away, encouraging them to learn how to learn.

Back at school, the Darwin theme offered plenty of ideas and resources. The children were firstly asked what they wanted to know about Darwin – his beard was a particular item of curiosity! Several children recognised him from the £10 note. Their enthusiasm was immediately sparked and many started finding out more as soon as they got home.

Emily and Yolaine next arranged some visits and outings. Tamsin Wimhurst from Cambridge Folk Museum came to the school with lots of resources. Visits were made to the Zoology Museum and also Darwin College where the Bursar had set up rooms specially for the visit (and he was very impressed with the childrens' knowledge). The emphasis at this stage was on teaching the pupils how to learn like Darwin had done e.g. doing experiments, taking "thinking walks", making close observations. They were given "thinking books" in which to draw, record, write stories and so forth. They were encouraged to bring interesting materials into school, ask questions about them then consider how they could themselves find the answers. The observational work they carried out helped improve both their art and handwriting skills.

The cross-curricular multi-aspect nature of the project has been a great success, encompassing science, history, personal stories – something for everyone. The children enjoyed the trips into Cambridge and the various local Darwin connections helped them relate to the subject.

Emily and Yolaine are clear that the work has had a positive impact on pupils. They are noticeably more confident about asking questions and in finding things out for themselves. Parents have commented on how they talked about the project when they got home. As for lessons learned, given that this is the first time the school has worked in this way, Emily and Yolaine would next time ensure there was more of a celebration at the end of the project, involving parents.

Finally, to one Darwin-related learning experience which the children weren't encouraged to emulate. Once when beetle-collecting he caught two beetles, one in each hand, then found a third – so he popped one beetle in his mouth to capture number three with his newly-freed hand. The children loved the story but fortunately didn't feel inclined to try it for themselves.

gel

Online Training

Provided by Governors, for Governors and Clerks

Free access for governors from schools subscribing to Cambridgeshire Governor Services

Register or revisit and take a look at the new website

When visiting the improved site governors will have the opportunity to win £25.00 worth of book tokens for their school library, simply by giving us some feedback on how the e-learning experience is working for them.

Governors E-Learning is an online training website for governors, which was developed by the Eastern Leadership Centre in partnership with several local authorities. It provides an opportunity for governors to access training more easily from their own homes, offices and schools and promote discussion about a range of topics in governors meetings. GEL will supplement conventional face-to-face training, rather than replace it. Additional information can be accessed through the Hot topics and Clerks' Page sections of the website.

Examples of Modules now available include:

- Induction
- Every Child Matters
- Health and Safety
- Performance Management
- Monitoring Performance Data and Targets
- Taking the Chair
- Role of the SEN Governor
- Succession Planning
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Looked after Children

Forthcoming Modules:

- FMSIS
- Finance
- Pupil Voice

To Register navigate to: **www.elc-gel.org/governors**

elc

The potential of outdoor learning

It may be a truism to say that the world is changing rapidly but a surprising area of current adaptation is among people who have been working on the issues of **climate change** and **sustainable development** for the last 2 decades. No longer on the fringes of thinking society, we are getting used to the fact that more and more people (business, politicians across the spectrum etc) are aware that climate change is occurring.

We know that many newcomers will focus specifically on the issues as they come to terms with the scale and potential of these threats. Those in the vanguard must not wait for others to catch up but must continue to focus on solutions - solutions such as Sustainable Development Education and this an overarching theme of the curriculum dimensions in the QCA "big picture of the curriculum" and the more recent Rose Report into the primary curriculum which may guide the development of learning in that phase. The DfES publication of the "Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom" in November 2006 had already pointed the way by recognising the high value of outdoor learning experiences for all young people.

We also know that social cohesion is an area of common concern as individuals show less awareness of their own potential but also their limitations. When this is placed beside the lack of understanding of others then we can see why society foundations are so fragile. Activities which build on environmental and social understanding and reinforcement are strongly needed improvements to our learning structure.

This was reinforced by the Ofsted report into Learning Outside the Classroom led by Robin Hamerton in the autumn of 2008, where he focused schools leadership teams and teachers on identifying the purpose and aims of opportunities of learning on these sort of visits, not simply relying on fun and enjoyment as the sole outcomes of activities for their young peole.

Outdoor learning practitioners take confidence in the knowledge that their profession is providing a major solution to contemporary challenges. Through outdoor learning, practitioners are enabling children and young people to development the qualities, attributes and competencies that they will need to survive and thrive in a changing world.

The Needs of Young People

Let's start with the needs of the child. What are the qualities and attributes that a young person will need in a changing world?

- Confidence – children will need to be confident. They will be faced with global scale and highly complex problems and they will need to be confident if they are not to be disempowered and simply give up.
- Responsible in their attitudes to and responses to other people.
- Problem solving – they will need to be enthusiastically positive about problem solving. They will need to be good team players recognising that "more heads are better than one". For that they will need to be good communicators.
- Further, they will need to be creative and rather than relying on genius, they will need to appreciate that team working with people from different disciplines and perspectives provide the conditions for innovation.
- The problems they will face will be stubborn therefore they will need to be tenacious. Conversely, they will also need to know when and how to adapt. Where changes are required, they will need to understand risk assessment and risk management.
- Finally, we will need better leaders. History shows that at times of change, leaders emerge from unexpected quarters. Though leading politicians currently buck the trend, we no longer expect public schools to be the sole providers of leaders. And although the therapeutic value of outdoor learning is invaluable to young people facing physical, behavioural, education and social challenges in their lives, we must not focus all attention on the 'hard to reach'. Fully inclusive provision is needed if young people are to have an early start in the components of leadership (confidence, communications etc.)

It is obvious that outdoor learning is one of the important ways, if not the best medium with which to enable young people to develop these very necessary qualities.

Nor should it come as a surprise that these qualities are exactly the same as those sought by business and industry as we face the challenges of globalisation. They are also the qualities and attributes that we seek from our young people as positive contributors within our communities and as responsible citizens.

Sustainable Development Education

Sustainable development is a challenging concept for many people and too often it is pushed (and willingly accepted) as primarily about the environment. It is not.

Put simply, it is about people and the choices that we make. It is about recognising that the choices we make have broader implications and that they can simultaneously impact on our society, economy and environment.

Where we can deliver positives in all three areas, we are likely to be acting sustainably. A good example is household insulation. Increasing the energy efficiency of a home will enhance the living environment for the family, and increase the financial viability of the household (by reducing energy bills,) and of course reduce emissions and impact on the environment.

The earlier part of this paper provides a more relevant example. By providing opportunities for young people to develop the qualities and attributes necessary for the economy, community and environment, outdoor learning is a leading provider of Sustainable Development Education.

A Big Picture of the Curriculum

The identification of the range of personal, learning and thinking skills in the revised secondary curriculum of:

- Independent enquirers
- Creative thinkers
- Reflective learners
- Team workers
- Self managers
- Effective participators.

Is picked up by the Rose Report in his "Essentials for Learning and Life" and identification of learning and thinking skills, personal and emotional skills and social skills. All these are well developed and delivered though opportunities for learning outside the classroom and may well be considered to give that sense of connection to life outside the institution. The relevance to outdoor learning is also apparent in references to broaden and deepen learning experience, to do more outwith the formal classroom setting, and to focus on challenge and fun in learning.

Of course, we don't motivate young people by encouraging them to do a programme on citizenship. But our programmes must be fun if children are to be receptive to learning. They are exciting and motivating in the way they appeal to young people. They can satisfy teachers and groups leaders whether they are linking outdoor learning to enterprise learning, eco-literacy or personal and social development. And they can meet the aspirations of educationalists and politicians, business people and communities, by delivering the attributes, qualities and competencies noted above.

We must not underestimate the extent to which we shall have to adapt. As Bruntland put it:

The radical change in human attitudes foreseen by the acceptance of the concept of sustainable development depends on a vast campaign of public education and re-education, a world-wide debate around these vital life and death issues.

Gro Harlem Brundtland
The World Commission on Environment and Development

We can recognise the synergies between concepts such as Sustainable Development Education, the learning focus of new educational Curriculums, and the needs of young people.

If we do, it is only a small step to an appreciation that, amidst the 'sea' of threats and concerns thrown up by a rapidly changing world, outdoor learning practitioners deliver real and essential solutions.

Ian Downing
Head of Grafham Water Centre

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Cultivating enthusiasm

Our photos show the beautiful garden at **St Peter's Junior School, Wisbech** which has been developed in connection with the **Octavia Hill Our Place** project. The editor heard from **Headteacher Judith Skelton, Site Manager David Sheldon** and **Groundsman Bill Smart** how the project has developed.

The Our Place Project was initiated by the Octavia Hill Birthplace Museum Trust to encourage primary schools to teach children an awareness of their responsibility for their environment. Part of this involves constructing at or near the school an "Our Place" which will enhance community life and provide a permanent record of the work.

St Peters is the home of "Our Place Two" (the hope is eventually to have 100) and comprises a large ornamental garden and a smaller vegetable plot. The project began nearly three years ago with a huge amount of work to prepare the site, much of it done by David and Bill. The planting is now maturing beautifully with the winding path taking you past many choice specimens, including "Our Place", a Harkness rose bred specially for the project. The famous Fens eel-catcher Peter Carter helped with the garden, including an area which recreates the habitat of the fens with reeds, bulrushes and even a punt; Peter also worked with the children to create the willow-hurdle fencing.

Bill runs a gardening club for the children and has been heartened by the enthusiasm many of them show for getting their hands dirty growing things; as he says, the vegetable plot in particular tells them that things don't grow in plastic bags.

Also on the site is a recycled garden (David is a master composter) which again gives the children powerful messages about the environment.

Above all though, the garden is a place of great beauty which can't fail to inspire everyone who comes to enjoy it.

Opening the door to innovative learning

The outdoor environment of every school offers an inspirational context for learning. In our world of virtual reality, the scene beyond the classroom door can provide real world learning experience that:

- is memorable, practical and "hands-on";
- contributes to raising achievement across the curriculum;
- is low on cost and high on value;
- promotes independence, co-operation and teamwork;
- develops key skills, including social and thinking skills;
- is motivational and engaging, and
- brings learning to life.

Outdoor learning can also help tackle many contemporary challenges, such as educating children about sustainable development.

The revised secondary curriculum and the Rose Report both highlight the importance of skilling students to be:

- independent enquiries
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self managers
- effective participators

All these can be well delivered through outside learning which, arguably, helps ensure a proper sense of connection to life beyond the classroom. This learning can also focus effectively on challenge and fun.

Examples of innovative practice in the outdoor classroom abound throughout Cambridgeshire schools. The county's specialists in learning outside the classroom, the Cambridgeshire Outdoors group are at the leading edge of Learning Outside the Classroom nationally. Grafham Water Centre, Burwell House, and CEES offer support for schools to ensure high quality learning beyond the classroom door.

The next articles provide examples of innovative practice from these specialists.

Cambridgeshire Environmental Education Service

CEES offers a wide range of services at its Centres, in the community and at schools. Here are four examples of recent **CEES-led activities** with **Primary School** children.

Energy Works works

82 year 5 children from Histon and Impington Junior School are now experts on renewable energy, climate change and helping our environment, thanks to CEES' Energy Works programme. Lead teacher, Lynn Saunders arranged for her three classes to spend a day at CEES' Education Centre at Coldham Wind Farm, with follow up workshops in school.

CEES specialist teachers, Nicky and Richard led the programme, welcoming classes to the wind farm and equipping them with safety helmets and goggles before heading out on the farm for a close encounter with a wind turbine.

Comments such as "Wow!", "I never knew it would be this big!" and "Awesome!" were heard as the children stretched out their arms trying to link hands around the base of the turbine tower. Other activities at the turbine included field sketching, measuring wind speed and direction, and calculating the height of the tower.

Back at the Education Centre after lunch Mrs Saunders had selected the climate change option from a list of workshops and was very pleased with the discussions that followed.

For the school-based workshop the focus was on solar energy and Nicky had brought CEES' solar thermal and photovoltaic kits for the children to experiment with. An "extra" for Histon and Impington was a visit to their local Co-op store.

The Co-operative Group own the site of the wind farm at Coldham, and are keen to link schools that visit the site with their local Co-op store, so Nicky had facilitated a visit. Mrs Saunders found the whole experience very successful and informative. Her class were working on the International Primary Curriculum's "Energy, light and sound" unit which suggested using books and the internet to research the subject. Her decision to use CEES' Energy Works programme instead met all the learning objectives. Her children were thoroughly engaged with all the activities and all of them gave their Energy Works experiences a "thumbs up". The visits, workshops and associated follow up work were entirely cross-curricular, including data handling for numeracy and persuasive letter writing for numeracy.

Even better, CEES' Energy Works programme is offered at no charge to schools, thanks to the support of partners, The Co-operative Group.

ENERGY WORKS

Water, water everywhere

For Mr Kett's year 3 and 4 class at Park Street Primary School, Cambridge their Spring Term theme of Water, linking science and geography, was the perfect starting point for a three-day programme of learning activities at Stibbington Residential Centre.

After settling in on the first morning and following the Eco Trail around the grounds, attention focussed in the afternoon on Stibbington's beautiful 40-acre wetland nature reserve.

CEES specialist teacher, Helen introduced the children to the reserve and to wetland habitats and led a very successful pond dipping session that resulted in lots of creatures being captured, studied, identified and then released back into the lake.
Day two saw the children learning everything there is to know about rivers, and mastering terms such as meander, erosion and confluence with the help of "kung fu rivers" and field work activities beside a local stream.

Water workshops on filtration followed in the afternoon, and a closer look at pond creatures using microscopes and visualiser in the classroom.

The final day saw the group following the "Sewage Sludge Trudge", a trail through Stibbington village. Along the route the children followed a map and photo trail to spot all the watery features of the built environment, from water stop taps to fire hydrants, with the highlight being a stop at the sewage farm – always popular!

In the space of three days the theme of Water was brought to life in a way that the children are sure to remember. The other benefits of the residential experience in terms of independence, environmental awareness, social skills, team work and co-operation were a further bonus!

Back in school at the beginning of the Summer Term the children were busy doing follow up work and writing news reports. Mr Kett reported that their residential experience had been "fantastic".

Mr Kett
Teacher

office@parkstreet.cambs.sch.uk

Learning across the Curriculum in the School Grounds

CEES' specialist teachers, Caroline and Judy spent a day at Stretham Primary School leading a whole staff training day. Their brief was to inspire the teachers to develop learning activities across the curriculum in the school grounds from Foundation to Year 6.

Story sticks, string trails, picture frames, outdoor kennings, tree hugging, sensory trails, alliterative scavenger hunts, sequencing instruction cards, pond minibeast riddles, estate agents persuasive text and The Gruffalo all provided inspiration for literacy activities in the school grounds.

Numeracy activities included: journeys and trails around the grounds; plant percentages; compass clues; cardinal cones; sound sensing; catching, counting and measuring minibeasts, and even using the properties of a right-angled isosceles triangle to measure the height of a tree.

For science they investigated plants, leaf litter and minibeasts, used identification keys and a variety of recording techniques, explored rocks and materials trails and looked at habitats and food chains. Geographical activities were based on using a wide range of different maps at different scales, studying the buildings in and around the school and thinking about local environmental issues. Art works inspired by features in the grounds and using natural materials found in the grounds completed the programme.

Throughout the day the emphasis was on equipping teachers with both ideas and confidence to take their lessons outside the classroom door. Safety and risk management featured prominently, and there were plenty of activities that required minimal equipment or preparation that teachers might use with their classes tomorrow.

Commenting on the day, Deputy Headteacher, Karen Stanton, rated all aspects excellent and particularly appreciated the "hands-on" nature of the programme and the opportunities to try out lots of learning activities. As an outcome from the day all staff at Stretham are now committed to preparing activity packs with teaching and learning resources for use in their school grounds.

An Evacuation experience

Children across Cambridgeshire schools, visit CEES to experience an evacuation and here is their story. Irene and Alfred Canon were sitting in the railway carriage at Wansford station anxiously listening to instructions from Mr Stafford, the Headteacher of Stibbington Primary School. They had just been evacuated from London and were probably going to be staying in the countryside at Stibbington until the war ended. Mr Stafford led Irene and Alfred and the other evacuees, wearing luggage labels and carrying gas mask boxes through the countryside towards the village school. On the way he told them all about looking for scrap metal to be melted down in the munitions factories, helping the farmers tend the crops in their fields, looking for pigeons to make pigeon pie for lunch (yuck!) and not to be frightened by the large black and white animals called cows as they provide milk (yuck again!).

At the school there were vegetable plots to be tended and the football field was going to be ploughed up to make way for more veg growing (shame). Lessons in the classroom were exciting today as there was a broadcast on the wireless from young Princess Elizabeth. She had a lovely message for the evacuees. And then no sooner had they done some ration sums than there was the sound of planes overhead. Mr Stafford said not to worry as they were "our boys", but before long there were enemy planes and sure enough the bombs started to fall and the air raid siren sounded. They didn't panic. They stayed calm. Off to the air raid shelter they all went and sang songs to cheer themselves up while bombs rained down all around them. There was a huge sigh of relief when the all clear sounded and they could return to their lessons in the classroom. They were learning to "Waste not, want not" and "Make do and mend", and they were glad to have a chance to write a post card to send home to Mum and Dad in London too.

At the end of the day it was time to complete an ID card with the name of their new guardian and their new address in Stibbington. Would the guardians be waiting outside the door to take Irene and Alfred off to their home? Or would the bus be waiting to take children back to their school in Cambridge while Mr Stafford, alias CEES teacher Brian, waved goodbye?

For any further information about the above four articles, contact: **cees.stibbington@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**, website: **www.cees.org.uk**

The curriculum – governors responsibilities

As governors are aware, the curriculum is all the planned learning for the pupils in the school. It includes the programme of taught subjects, the school ethos and the range of extra-curricular activities that take place during and outside the school day. The curriculum should promote intellectual, moral, cultural, spiritual and physical development and prepare pupils to become good citizens. It must be inclusive and governors must also promote the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.

Responsibility for the curriculum is shared between the headteacher, the governing body, Local Authorities and the Secretary of State for Education. Governors are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the National Curriculum is taught in schools and that a broad and balanced curriculum is provided. Governors are also responsible for ensuring that a Curriculum Policy is in place. They can then use this to help them monitor and evaluate their responsibilities. The policy will usually be drawn up by the headteacher but must be agreed by the governing body. Approval of the policy can be delegated to a committee.

The headteacher will be responsible for ensuring implementation of the 'curriculum policy' every day in school. The headteacher is also responsible for monitoring the standards of teaching.

The governors' monitoring role is vital and must be continuous. Governors will be able to carry out this role:

- by looking at the headteacher's report;
- reviewing the school improvement/development plan;
- familiarising themselves with and understanding the schools performance data (RAISEonline)*
- making 'focused' school visits;
- researching and keeping themselves updated;
- attending governor training briefings and courses;
- asking questions.

* Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self-Evaluation (RAISEonline) – is a database to enable tracking of school data.

Governors are responsible for:

- setting and monitoring performance targets and achievement for pupils (with support from the headteacher and the school improvement partner)
- ensuring the curriculum is assessed and reported
- publication of examination and National Curriculum test results
- ensuring approved qualifications and syllabuses are used

The governing body also has more specific responsibilities.

All governing bodies must have a written Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) policy. In primary schools the governing body decides whether SRE, over and above that required by the National Curriculum is taught. All schools must have a Special Educational Needs Policy (SEN) and ensure that a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is appointed and trained. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 also requires the governing body of a maintained school to appoint a member of staff to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children who are on the school roll. The governing body must also ensure that they receive appropriate training.

All maintained schools must provide RE for their pupils. At voluntary aided schools with a religious character, RE will be in line with the tenets of the faith of the school. In community schools and all foundation and voluntary schools without a religious character, RE will be taught in accordance with the agreed syllabus for the area. All governing bodies must prohibit political indoctrination and ensure the balanced treatment of political issues. The day to day implementation of this duty is delegated to the headteacher.

Governor training: **'Monitoring and Evaluating the Curriculum'** will be provided in the Training and Development Programme September 2010 - 2011.

Tuesday 7.00pm – 9.00pm	12 Oct 10 City of Ely Community College	**MEC/01**
Tuesday 7.00pm – 9.00pm	9 Nov 10 Wood Green Animal Shelter, Godmanchester	**MEC/02**
Monday 7.00pm – 9.00pm	7 Feb 11 Cambridge Professional Development Centre	**MEC/03**
Thursday 7.00pm – 9.00pm	26 May 11 The Boathouse, Wisbech	**MEC/05**

These training sessions aim to identify the role of governors in monitoring and supporting curriculum development within their school. An overview of the statutory and non-statutory curriculum will be given.

For more information

To book contact Cambridgeshire Governor Services by emailing **governor.training@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**. Details of all the courses offered will be accessible via the Education Portal **www.ccceducation.net**. Search on Resource ID 3148.

Unravelling the past at Burwell House

A large sepia portrait hangs above the fireplace in the main lounge of our large country house, seen by all groups staying at the Centre whether they be KS1 groups with an orienteering focus, KS2 groups looking at scientific investigation or youth choir groups using the Centre as a weekend rehearsal venue.

This portrait is used by increasing numbers of visiting schools as an excellent starting point to unravelling the past and investigating the life and times of Victorian Burwell House. It is clearly a man, he is dressed smartly, and is in a relatively formal pose. Children who have looked at this photo have told staff at Burwell House that he looks friendly, that he looks important, and that they like his sideburns!

To get further than this more information and further documentation is provided. The photo was taken in the 1860s, and was purchased from the House of Commons. It might be noticed that this is a very high quality photo for one so early – which must demonstrate the relative importance and/or wealth of the man in society. But the purchase from the palace of Westminster? Children may be able to give ideas as to why parliament may hold photos of particular people.

Looking at the 1861 census return for the village provides further clues. Residing in Burwell House are the Ball family, and their 3 servants, with Edward Ball listed as "landowner, magistrate and member of parliament". And then on a plaque on the back of the house (left) are the initials E B A – this was put in place by Edward and Anne Ball when substantially extending the house (originally built by Anne's father) in 1822.

Using this investigation of photos, census data, family trees and primary historical evidence as a basis and background for their day, groups (often in costumes) then take part in a host of experiential activities to really get into the Victorian past.

This wide and varied menu of activities might include:

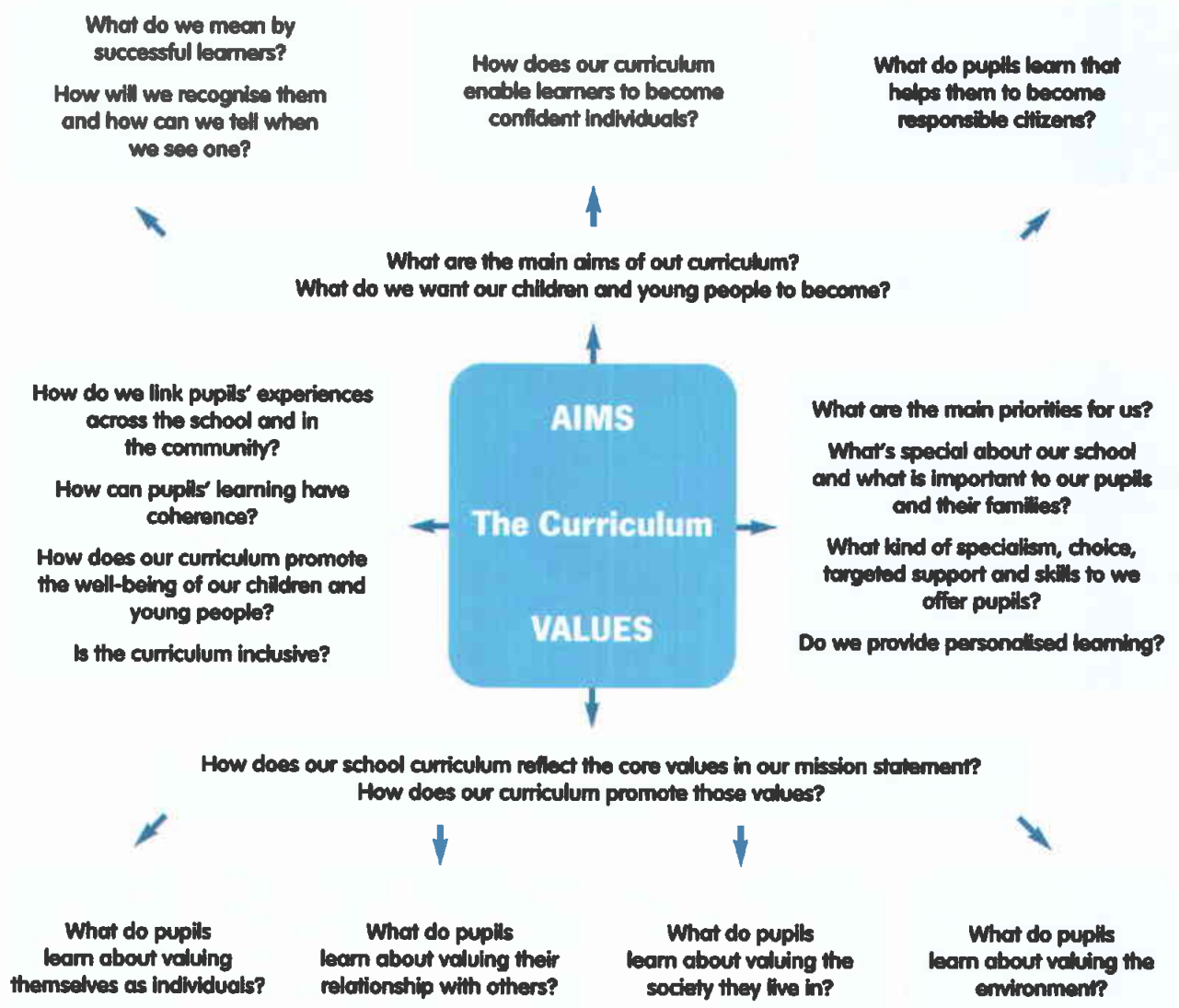
- Investigating further Victorian evidence in the house and grounds. Children can date and identify the oldest trees, find evidence of greenhouses and kitchen gardens, spot blocked up fireplaces and see the former servants quarters (now the bedrooms used by visiting teachers!).
- Using the TV studio to present Victorian themed news programmes. Groups have prepared and filmed shows including interviews with Queen Victoria, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and with Edward Ball himself.
- Learning to play Victorian games such as croquet and hopscotch.
- Being terrified by the strictest of teachers in the schoolroom. How can children manage with using a slate to write on, or a quill and ink? Will they cope with the humiliation of being put in the finger stocks!
- Experiencing the life of a servant, getting involved in washday (watch your fingers near that mangle), gardening (topiary is tricky), and serving and entertaining at the evening banquet for the Ball family and their esteemed guests (played by randomly selected children, often with great glee and gusto).

With almost limitless possibilities for investigation, including tales of skullduggery, shipwreck and South Africa's most popular chutney (yes, really) all linking back to the Centre, many groups continue to greatly enhance their learning through taking part in these and many other innovative curriculum experiences at Burwell House.

Contact: james.dawkins@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
www.burwellhouse.com

Getting to grips with the curriculum

All schools have mission statements but do those aims and values drive what your school provides? Below is a mind map for governors, taken from **A Curriculum for the 21st Century, A Governors' Guide** published by QCA. It can help you assess how effective your statement is and ensure that it generates improvement in the learning of your pupils.


What do we mean by successful learners?
How will we recognise them and how can we tell when we see one?
How does our curriculum enable learners to become confident individuals?
What do pupils learn that helps them to become responsible citizens?
What are the main aims of out curriculum?
What do we want our children and young people to become?
How do we link pupils' experiences across the school and in the community?
How can pupils' learning have coherence?
How does our curriculum promote the well-being of our children and young people?
Is the curriculum inclusive?
AIMS
The Curriculum
VALUES
What are the main priorities for us?
What's special about our school and what is important to our pupils and their families?
What kind of specialism, choice, targeted support and skills to we offer pupils?
Do we provide personalised learning?
How does our school curriculum reflect the core values in our mission statement?
How does our curriculum promote those values?
What do pupils learn about valuing themselves as individuals?
What do pupils learn about valuing their relationship with others?
What do pupils learn about valuing the society they live in?
What do pupils learn about valuing the environment?

Passover provides feast of ideas

The Vine Primary School, Cambourne is always looking for new ways to make learning exciting, meaningful, inclusive and challenging. The editor met up with members of the Year 3/4 team to find out about just one of the innovative projects the school has offered pupils recently.

Year 3/4 children have been studying the first Passover. The start point was learning the history of the Jewish Nation, back in ancient Sumeria, where Abraham came from. The children built models of ziggurats, lapus lazuli jewellery and pottery whilst also trying their hand at cuneiform writing – this formed a display in the entrance hall. Bible stories and historical and archaeological material were used to help children understand the context and some were even inspired to make independent family visits to the British Museum.

On to Joseph and Moses, with imaginative ways and means employed to dramatise the events. Letters were written from the Pharaoh to Joseph, asking for an interpretation of his dreams, with the replies. Speeches were written for Moses about the Burning Bush. The children wrote Sadness poems describing the Israelites' feelings on leaving Egypt; they also made paintings based on biblical themes. In P.E. four Israeli folk dances were learnt along with appropriate songs. This culminated in a performance which the children helped write telling the stories through songs, dances, sketches, plays and poems.

After this, the audience was invited to stay for a version of a Passover meal, the food all being made by the children – lamb and mint meatballs, cucumber relish, salad, hard boiled eggs, unleavened bread and honey and apple cake. The tables held menus explaining why these foods were used. Parents could also visit a display in the school hall with the Red Sea parting in one corner, origami frogs and locusts on the walls and display boards full of the children's learning.

The team felt that the project was really successful with the children totally immersed in the stories and wanting to know more. Parents commented on their surprise at the depth of interest, some children even seeking out the family bible. Pupils, and boys in particular, were fascinated by the story of Moses, especially the fact that despite his heroic deeds, he was very much human as well. The project inspired some pretty sophisticated discussions, around Trust for example, given the extent to which the Israelites had to trust in God; the children did some deep thinking about what it means to trust and learning who to trust.

Children were also asked to commemorate a special occasion in their own lives which produced heartfelt and sensitive responses in many cases e.g. about people who had died or families splitting up.

Material from the project will now be compiled into a large book so that there is a permanent record of this very successful initiative.

Cambridgeshire County Council

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www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/childrenyoungpeople/socialcare/fostering/breaks/

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Community engagement: the difference governors make

On **6 March 2010**, 151 governors and officers met at **Hinchingbrooke Performing Arts Centre, Huntingdon** for the **Governors' Annual Conference**.

Carol Peel, Governor Services Manager, welcomed everyone and introduced the first speaker, Gordon Jeyes, Executive Director, Children and Young People's Service. He spoke about the diverse nature of Cambridgeshire and how it is more complex than commonly thought. He stated that in our recent inspection of community cohesion, OfSTED found much good practice to celebrate. Gordon thanked governors for their contribution in not only promoting community cohesion, but in improving outcomes for our children.

"Excellent and informative conference. Governor Services have exceeded peoples expectations"

David Moore, former HMI, then spoke about the national picture. He explained that governors played a vital role in representing the views of their local community. The world is now a diverse place and it does not matter where in the UK you live. He asked if schools interact with their local communities? What impact do these communities have on learning and teaching? How does the school take information from its local community and make use of it? Diversity is far more than ethnicity, but includes gender, poverty and different generations. He spoke about the benefits to society of breaking down barriers between generations. David believes a lot can be gained by looking at similarities and he gave the example of how, when teaching, he had asked his class what their parents had done on a Saturday morning. He found many had gone to the pictures, be that in London or India. Making connections was vital in opening up discussion. He said governors needed to be concerned about the impact the actions of the school were having and should see this in their SEF. Also that young people need to have social skills developed, so they can fit into society and be prepared to go out into the world. He ended by saying how impressed he was with the number of governors who had given up their Saturday morning to attend the conference.

"Hemingford Grey School Council were a highlight"

The next speakers were four pupils from the School Council from Hemingford Grey Primary School and their Headteacher, Mrs Kate Fox. The children outlined their work on the School Council. The school has a very active election process for places on the Council, with hard fought campaigns. They particularly spoke about their involvement in seeking ways to improve behaviour as they felt poor behaviour stopped children learning. Other areas included where they had an active involvement, influencing school policies such as anti- bullying, healthy eating and homework. The children impressed delegates with their enthusiasm and commitment to improving things not only for themselves but other children less fortunate.

"Puppets were fantastic"

After the break Jon Pratt showed two excerpts from videos demonstrating how puppets could be used to address difficult issues with children and young people. The words were from actual children, who had then designed the puppet which spoke. Jon explained that this was an effective way to make inarticulate voices heard. Further, it gave children a voice for the things they wanted to be heard but could not say directly. When used sensitively, the teacher could facilitate discussion about difficult issues facing children and young people.

The next two speakers were from Ashton on Mersey School and Broadoak School federated to form the West Trafford Learning Partnership. Tarun Kapur CBE, Headteacher spoke about the challenges of federating two very different secondary schools. One was very successful, oversubscribed, in an urban area and supportive parents, whereas, Broadoak School had poor results and low aspirations. It was isolated with poor transport links, low numbers and had a disengaged local community. In meetings with staff and parents he valued the support provided by his Chair of Governors in providing a united front. Improving behaviour was a priority. This was tackled by introducing a new uniform, giving children a sense of belonging and self worth and also by introducing rewards that were meaningful e.g. tickets to watch a Manchester United home game. Schools are now working more closely and as other students come to Broadoak for specific courses, he has to be careful about telling pupils off for not being in uniform. As an executive headteacher over two schools and working closely with another, Tarun said he needed and depended on a strong team below him. This had provided many opportunities for staff who without the federation would have left the school for promotion else where. Therefore the federation had not only brought benefits for the pupils, as the results of Broadoak have and are continuing to improve, but also for career development for staff. Tarun stated that all this would not have been possible with the support and challenge from his governing body. He then asked Brian Rigby MBE, Chair of Governors to speak.

Brian explained he had retired early, and his wife, already a governor, put his name forward. She said he needed another interest besides golf. He joined the governing body of Ashton-on-Mersey and within a short space of time became chair. He was committed, like Tarun, to taking advantage of any opportunities that would improve the education of children at the school. Following the federation he expected a lot of complaints from parents, but none were forthcoming. However, he received a phone call asking if he was chair of Broadoak, and if so asking for a meeting. Brian said he was a bit daunted but agreed. The man came to his house and wanted to give him money for the school fund for school uniform for families in financial hardship. He explained he had passed to go to the grammar school but his mother could not afford the uniform. Brian was obviously very moved at this generosity by a member of the public. Brian said that he and Tarun had a good professional relationship. However, as chair he did not do everything. He depended on a strong committee structure with committed governors who effectively carried out their work and reported back. The success of the governing body was down to commitment and teamwork.

"Brian was most memorable"

"Tarun was outsatnding and inspirational"

That only left a few minutes for Barry Smethurst, Chair of the Governor Advisory Group to thank governors for their attendance and the Governor Services Team for organising it.

Ninety nine per cent of people rated the conference as being a worthwhile use of their time, with one governor saying "Variety and contents inspiring, with food for thought."

Next year's conference will be held on 5 March, with the title Working in Partnership.

Mantle of the Expert – they wear it well

Readers may recall that this time last year **Learning Together** had a major feature on the **Mantle of the Expert** project which had been piloted at 16 Cambridgeshire schools. The Editor visited one of these schools, **Monkfield Park Primary, Cambourne** to ask **Acting Co-Headteacher Caroline Stamp-Dod** and **Acting Deputy Head Annie Howell** how the project was going.

Mantle of the Expert is pupil-led and rooted in drama, enquiry and imagination. Children and teachers work together to create imaginary communities within which they function as experts in a particular field to fulfil the requirements of a specific commission. Caroline and Annie said that after an inevitably tentative start, this way of working has gone from strength to strength, mainly because the children respond so well to it. They have been careful to roll it out in a non-prescriptive way so that teachers can choose as and when to enter Mantle mode but all staff are now enthused by the positive aspects, especially the freedom around creativity and risk-taking.

The starting point had, of course, to be the national curriculum. The school looked at how its objectives could be met by teaching in a Mantle way, also drawing on the experiences of other schools. They found that the strengths of Mantle lie particularly in cross-curricular work; a recent topic like Sustainable Housing in Bangladesh, for instance, hooked in all sorts of different aspects of curriculum-related activity.

Most importantly, Mantle clearly motivates children. When asked what they enjoy doing when working this way, they said things like "Stepping in the shoes of a character", "Makes it more interesting and has a range of subjects in one" and "Thinking of lots of ideas". They find learning different because "You feel more in charge of yourself than normal lessons" and "You work out your own problems". Pupils went on to say "You learn from your mistakes", "You discover it on your own" and "You learn to work as a team".

As an example of the confidence which Mantle instils, I visited the day after the general election to find that the children themselves had decided to run their own mini-election.

Many parents/carers have also caught the Mantle bug. The school organised a curriculum evening where parents were invited to take part in a Mantle as if they were a class of adult learners. They all "got it" and have been very supportive and understanding of the approach since.

Caroline and Annie report positive feedback from teachers. They invariably find that children really want to write for their fictitious audience and to take the lead. Importantly, they can distinguish when they are in Mantle and when not. As an example, a class last year was asked to create rescue packs for people stranded up mountains. This began with an SOS from someone stuck up the Eiger; unprompted the children went straight into Mantle mode, snapping out again at the appropriate time.

Teachers plan the key learning experiences before handing the lead to pupils.

Sometimes they need to throw a spanner in the works e.g. someone writing a letter of complaint. A project on a war memorial for Cambourne, for instance, was given a fresh focus by a letter coming in from the White Poppy Campaign. This obliged the pupils to examine what they had been doing from a new angle and to think through the issues which had been raised (which they did excellently, proposing a peace pavilion as well as a memorial). Creative responses come readily to the fore, taking thinking to another level.

Finally, some quotes from Monkfield teachers about Mantle. On what they enjoy about it they say "able to explore a topic in more depth" and "the children take themselves further than you think they could go". They also feel that "MoE opens up opportunities outside the traditional curriculum", gives "opportunities for the less confident and SEN children to shine" and "enormously beneficial to children, building self-esteem".

Governors' Questions and Answers

Question 1

I was pleased to be asked to be a member of the curriculum committee. However, now I'm a bit worried. I'm not a teacher, so what do I know about what should be taught in our school? I feel very uncertain, and am thinking of resigning from this committee as I'm a bit of a waste of space. Surely this is one area that should be left to the professionals?

While it's understandable that any new member of a committee or governing body may feel a lack of confidence, it's a mistake to think that you have nothing to offer and should resign. Firstly, you are not working on your own, but are part of a team. The committee will include teachers and you are an equally important member as you bring the benefit of your experience of the education system and your wider perspective. Both of these attributes can contribute to improving education for the children at your school. To improve your confidence and make you an effective member of the committee, keep asking questions. Simple questions are effective - Can you explain that? Or can you tell me why you are proposing that? This will not only increase your knowledge and understanding but give the school an opportunity to reflect on what they are doing.

A few questions you can ask are:

- How will this benefit our children?
- What are the main priorities for us?
- What do you mean when you say 'successful learner'?
- What king of specialism, choice, support and skills do we offer our children?
- Are all children able to benefit from what the school offers, and how do you know?
- Are children happy being at school, and how do you know?

Question 2

I would like to know how I and my colleagues on our governing body monitor standards and the performance of the school.

The governing body receives or has access to a great deal of information about how the school is doing. **Some of the following you will be familiar with:**

Headteacher's termly report is your most important monitoring document. It should include information on children's achievement, but should not identify individual children. It will be closely linked to the targets detailed in the school development plan.

Annual report from the SIP (School Improvement Partner) to Governors is again very valuable as it gives an independent opinion from an education professional.

RAISEonline is a database with information about the context of your school, the progress of groups of learners and trends over 3 years. Your headteacher and senior staff will use this data to identify where the school is doing well and areas that need to be a priority for improvement. While most governing bodies ask their headteacher to report on the findings, governors can now ask their school for direct access to RAISEonline. For confidentiality governors only have limited access so they cannot drill down into the scores achieved by individual children.

Reports from subject leaders in school. This is a useful way to find out what is taught in your school, what the successes are and the challenges. A short presentation followed by an opportunity to ask questions can be very effective. Governors get a better understanding and staff often feel supported. It works best if meetings can happen after school rather than in the evening. This could either be a full governing body meeting or a committee meeting.

Visits to school are a really good way for governors to learn about what the school does. As lay people we cannot judge the quality of teaching and learning but we can feel the atmosphere or ethos. Visiting your school when it is in operation is a very different experience to attending a meeting on an evening when the building is an empty shell. Governors can then understand the context of the school and make informed decisions. It is strongly advised that governing bodies adopt a policy about how school visits will operate, so making the best use of everyone's time.

Question 3

Do we have to have named governors and if so what must we have?

The short answer is no. The statutory requirement is to monitor the performance of your school and how you do it is up to you. Having named governors can be an effective way of managing the workload of the governing body. Unlike committees, which have delegated authority, named governors are not there to make decisions, but have volunteered to find out more about their area. They are also a mechanism for communication between the governing body and the relevant member of staff. If you choose to have named governors you can link them to the priorities in your school development plan, classes, subject areas or key stages. Again it is useful for your governing body to agree expectations and how information will be fed back into meetings.

Carol Peel
Cambridgeshire Governor Services Manager

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2010

The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to undertake a **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA)** every three years. Work is currently underway on the new CSA for 2010/11.

Our first CSA was completed in 2007/08 and involved consulting 1450 parents, 512 children and young people, 86% of all childcare providers in Cambridgeshire, plus key internal and external partners. **More details can be found at:**

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/parents/childcare/sufficiency.htm

An outcome of the research in 2007/08 was creation of action plans to inform development of all early years and childcare places in every locality. In the Wisbech locality, one of the key priorities at the time was establishment of quality holiday childcare for school-aged children in the town.

Case Study: Holiday childcare in Wisbech

Kidzone Childcare Services Whittlesey secured a Sure Start new places grant from the Childcare Development Team to develop a 16 place holiday childcare scheme. The scheme opened its doors in July 2009 at Peckover Primary School in Wisbech, and since then, it has run during the school holidays, looking after between twenty and thirty local children from schools across the Wisbech area.

Children attending get to take part in a range of stimulating experiences, from arts and crafts, to quad biking and archery. During the longer holidays there are plenty of trips out as well.

The following comments describe how the holiday club is providing more than just childcare during the school holidays for children and their families:

Carrie Norman, Acting Headteacher Peckover Primary School: "Kidzone has allowed children who would not normally be able to access such activities, to visit places such as Wicksteed park and take part in 'quad biking' and other exciting opportunities. Our parents regularly ask if Kidzone will take place each holiday as their children really enjoy the opportunity."

Kidzone Childcare Services: "In fourteen years of operation Kidzone has seen many changes in systems, inspections and general administration of a play setting, but in fourteen years the children are still the centre of our operation and their needs have not changed; the children want to test boundaries, challenge their environment and explore ideas. Kidzone has always tried to meet these needs in a safe and secure environment and will continue to do so in all its practices whether out of school, holiday, day care or Early Years Foundation Stage children."

Comments from parents:

- "My two children have attended Kidzone holiday club on many occasions and thoroughly enjoyed it. A wide range of activities are provided. My children always ask to go back and can't stop talking about their day! They both have different interests and personalities but these are catered for at Kidzone - they both have a great day. The staff are always welcoming and warm."
- "Just wanted to say my daughter has been coming since last year. She loves every minute of her time with you guys. She never wants to come away and asks if I can work afternoons and not just mornings, so she can stay longer at Kidzone!"

In Kidzone's most recent inspection (October 2009), Ofsted said: "Kidzone's partnership with parents is outstanding".

Find out more

about Kidzone online at:
Wisbech holiday facebook page:
http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=111362562231242

Kidzone website:
http://kidzone-childcare.co.uk

Research is currently underway for the next CSA, among parents/carers and childcare providers, but also among children and young people. Governors and headteachers may be approached by the research company, Morgan's Research Ltd, or by your Extended Schools Coordinator, and invited to take part in this part of the process.

Once the data is in, and has been analysed, a Childcare Sufficiency Report and Action Plan will be drawn up, to inform the developments of the future!

Any school or other provider interested in setting up out-of-school childcare should contact the Childcare Development team on **01954 283373**.

A new education portal

The Education Portal (**www.ccceducation.net**) has been a major channel of communications between the Local Authority and schools since 2003. In that time thousands of documents including policies and guidance, news, events and resources have been available to teachers in schools throughout the county. But technology moves on and the Portal now needs replacement. Though we are still actively working on the present Portal – and recently improved its search facilities – our energies are firmly focused on Portal 2 and its proposed launch in January 2011.

What's in it for you at Portal 2?

- Schools will receive resources and information better targeted to users, giving you what you need when you need it.
- General information will be easier to find. Document and web page contents will be searched too.
- What you see will be more personalised. By logging in, you will have Calendars and To Do Lists aimed at your role, plus you can choose your interests to ensure you get relevant information.
- Information will be graded by importance and subject to user feedback so you can comment on whether it was relevant, urgent or simply useful.
- Features for sharing, responding and collaborating will be built in.

What can schools do to help?

Our task list for schools would include:

- Housekeeping any data you currently hold on the Portal and making sure you have backups so you can upload to the new Portal.
- Alerting us to any active communities such as staff intranet or governors' community.
- Working with us to decide what to do about your school website, if it is currently hosted by DigitalBrain (the old portal provider).
- Volunteering to give your views as we move through development and testing of the new service.
- Logging on and using it! The more you use the Portal the more information the LA will provide for you. It's by far the best way to keep in touch.

What's next?

- Since January we have been working with our ICT partner, Dell, and a range of Portal users to develop the user requirement and Portal design.
- From June, and throughout the summer, the Portal will be developed, and we aim to publish some mock-ups as it takes shape.
- Throughout the autumn term, the Portal will be tested, and selected data will be moved to Portal 2.
- We aim to launch in January 2011.

Duncan Grey
Portal Manager

duncan.grey@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Updates on progress are at **http://tinyurl.com/yat8hza**
or look for Portal Regeneration Community

Powering up in Fenland

Paul Springford, Action Manager of the **Education ICT Service**, writes about provision of a managed ICT service at the schools in the **Fenland BSF** project.

"We want our students to power up when they come to school and not power down." Andrew Field, Head of ICT at Neale-Wade Community College, was telling bidders what he wanted from the Building Schools for the Future scheme.

In May, Cambridgeshire signed a contract with Equitix and Partnerships for Schools to set up a Local Education Partnership with a mission to transform learning. This new body will draw down government funding to modernise our six Fenland schools with secondary age students. About 10% of the budget, over £12 million, is to be spent on ICT.

So what will this eye-watering amount provide for the lucky schools? There are two ways to answer this question. The first is to talk about lots of state of the art ICT equipment. The second answer involves a managed ICT Service. More on this in a moment.

In both cases, the key issue for schools is to think long and hard about what they want to do with ICT. They can't just say they need 15 laptops and an interactive whiteboard in every classroom. We told Equitix that we wanted them to provide "ICT on demand" to students and staff. Colleagues in the schools have been putting flesh on this skeleton of a statement and it's down to Equitix, through their ICT partner Dell, to explain how the ICT budget can be used to achieve their aims.

At the moment, the focus is on the first two community colleges to be modernised, Thomas Clarkson in Wisbech and Neale-Wade in March. In these schools there will be some conventional PCs and laptop computers. But most of the time, when students need a computer, they will use lightweight ultramobile PCs, or netbooks as they are sometimes called, connected by wireless to the school network. In some cases they will be issued to individuals for their exclusive use; in other cases, banks of netbooks will be available for use whenever they are needed. And if students bring in their own devices, the network will automatically check them out for security, and if everything's OK, they will be connected.

Other facilities will help to transform the learning environment. Digital signage will be an important way of sharing information among the school community. Devices such as visualisers will offer new ways of investigating documents and 3D objects in the classroom. Datapoints will allow online registration, access control and cashless catering using smart cards or finger scanners if the schools feel ready to introduce them.

At the heart of the new set-up is the Learning Platform, an online space where students can store work in progress, find learning materials, submit work for comment by their teachers and peers, and take part in online discussions and learning activities. They will be able to log on at home or at school, if they are visiting another school or FE college, in fact anywhere in the world where there is a device with an internet connection. For Cambridgeshire, Dell are developing a brand new bespoke platform, and other secondary schools will be able to subscribe if they choose.

So what about the managed ICT service? Dell will be responsible for identifying, purchasing and maintaining the equipment which enables the school to achieve what it wants to do. There will be financial penalties if anything doesn't work properly. The aim is to free schools to focus on the business of learning. In the same way, 180 schools now look to us to run SIMS for them; they just use it in a web browser instead of worrying about software upgrades and server specifications. Not everyone has a generous BSF budget, but managed services look like the way of the future.

more info: bsf@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Preference treatment hits the mark

The new freedoms offered at KS3 following the demise of SATS led **Hinchingbrooke School, Huntingdon** to look at reinvigorating their curriculum for Year 9s. **Deputy Head Steve Ellison** and colleagues **Grahame Middleton** and **Alistair Dewar** told the editor how they went about it.

Grahame explained that the start point was market research with year 8 asking them the question "what do you want your curriculum to look like?" Key words which emerged included "new", "practical", "fun" and (perhaps surprisingly) "different languages". Grahame would strongly advise any school going down a similar route to do likewise as the pupils really felt ownership of what followed.

Delivering on Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) was another imperative and, putting this together with the student views, the school came up with Preferences, which kicked off last Autumn term. Students receive a catalogue with details of 16 study areas, all tied in some way to practical activities. Students choose six and get to do three of them. **Subjects include:**

- Formula One Challenge, based around designing and racing a model car and planning and implementing a racing strategy, using actual track data
- Japanese Language and Culture, learning to speak and write some Japanese but also finding out about customs, food and the country's culture generally
- Ancient History, with topics such as archaeology, Latin, Greek ideas and Beowulf.

Studying Preferences takes up 20% of the pupil's learning time.

Steve described the process for introducing the initiative into the school, which involved persuading parents, governors and staff that it represented an exciting opportunity which wouldn't impact adversely on the "mainstream" teaching. The fact, for instance, that there was no longer a need to revise for SATS demonstrated that time could be found without reducing the KS4 workload. As it happens, any concerns were successfully assuaged and most were highly enthusiastic; some parents wished they'd had similar opportunities at Year 9 while Grahame says that the staff "really went for it – Preferences removes the shackles of the national curriculum". The children absolutely love the scheme, as you'll read later.

All the Preference subjects were proposed by staff. One rule is that if your subject already has 10% or more share of the curriculum, you can't offer more of the same.

Once decisions were made on what to offer an open evening was held for parents and children with each Preference having a stall to display its wares; the students could also visit this the following day.

Reflecting on how it has gone so far, Steve, Grahame and Alistair say they wouldn't do anything differently. Feedback has been positive – a 20% sample of the year group was unanimous in its enthusiasm for the Preferences concept. Steve is clear that it's about much more than enjoyment – there's a coherent set of curriculum objectives. Students' new enthusiasm and skills also transfer into their regular lessons. **Points he would make though are:**

- it does help to have a big school
- finding sufficient teachers to cover each area can be a challenge
- the element of choice for students is absolutely key.

Another guiding principle had been for the initiative to be cost-neutral and this has been achieved – so whilst some start-up and materials costs may be higher than before, you don't, for instance, have to buy sets of 30 text books.

Finally I had the pleasure of meeting Poppy, Chris, Matt, Paige, Chloe and Charley from Year 9 who told me about the Preferences they were studying and why they liked the approach. Poppy appreciated the responsibility and freedom which Preferences gives her. For Chris, trying something you haven't done before, like Business Studies, was an attraction; you could have a taster without long-term commitment. Charley liked the freedom to decide how to go about your studies; his only regret was that he couldn't take Japanese further as it isn't available (yet) at GCSE. Matt was very excited by the FI Preference, especially as there will be involvement in a national competition.

Chloe and Paige were both tackling an exotic mixture of Preferences and relishing the variety.

There will be a full evaluation at the end of this term but Preferences is certainly going ahead again next year. Steve and the team are even considering whether a similar sort of scheme could be introduced for Year 8.

Communicating creatively

Castle School, Cambridge opened four years ago, replacing four Special Schools in the city to provide an area special school for pupils age 2-19. An Ofsted inspection a couple of years ago, whilst essentially positive, suggested there was scope for developing further the communications aspects of the curriculum. The editor met **Headteacher Carol McCarthy, Deputy Head Anne Haberfield** and **Access to Learning Coordinator, Janice Frankham** to find out how they went about this.

Carol explained that the first decision was to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach so that everyone – governors, teachers, teaching assistants, therapists – was fully involved in the three-year project. Anne and Janice are leading on its delivery; although it links closely to the Inclusion Development Programme, an early examination of the areas which needed to be covered showed that a holistic approach would be best.

The areas concerned are:

- intensive interaction
- visual structures
- specific difficulties
- alternative and augmentative communications
- social and emotional
- adult communications

The next step was a staff skills audit which has helped identify both the skills already available and the training needed to address gaps – the aim is to have staff sufficiently confident to be able to mentor others. A two-year training programme has been devised, with a third year for review and consolidation. Specialists have been brought in to deliver training in particular areas such as Makaton and Picture Exchange (PECS).

To help track progress, case studies are being written about 14 students from across the spectrum; in this way the impact of this new way of working can be measured over time.

Anne and Janice have been taking "Learning Walks" around the school; these are another tool for checking progress and work through staff feedback, physical evidence and assessing staff confidence.

The end of the project will see a further skills audit so that before and after comparisons can be made.

Anne and Janice then told me about some of the specific communication strategies which have been used with particular pupils.

Using a switch in literacy

Using a switch in PE

Using PECS in the community

The Picture Exchange Communication system is a way to teach initiated communications. The child is given a set of pictures of favourite items; when they want one of these, they give the member of staff the relevant picture, and are then given the item. This exchange reinforces communication. The process works up from very simple requests to complex sentences but is always based on the student-initiated exchange principle.

Identiplay aims to develop play in children with autistic spectrum disorders or major social communication difficulties. It involves mirrored activities with the adult setting out two sets of toys on a table; the adult then models a simple playscript, watching and waiting for the child's engagement. As children become more familiar with the mimic structure they often create or add in their own elements to the play.

The school also uses Assessment Boards as a way by which students can assess their own progress and articulate what they do and don't like.

Carol, Anne and Janice were keen to emphasise that this approach to improving communication is being embedded into everything that the school does; effective communication is integral to good teaching and learning as well as benefitting behaviour behaviour. Although the strategy is at a relatively early stage, the innovative and rigorous way in which it is being developed is clearly already bearing fruit.

Following faded **footsteps**

Petersfield Primary School, **Orwell** is a small school (119 pupils) serving five villages where the number of people over 60 is nearly twice that of those aged 5-14. The editor met **Headteacher**, **Amanda Tuck**, to find out about a project which aims to bring these generations closer together.

Amanda explained that the project, "Following Faded Footsteps", has involved pupils locating people who attended school in the villages, some recently, some many years ago. Following training as journalists, the pupils have interviewed these people and the results are being used to create a film and a booklet. The interviews were structured around the themes set out in the DfES national framework for sustainable schools (Petersfield is an Eco-School). There are Food and Drink, Energy and Water, Travel and Traffic, Purchasing and Waste, Buildings and Grounds, Inclusion and participation, Local Well-Being and the Global Dimension. The eight aspects are being used as sustainability "doorways" which act as an easily applicable way to approach a set of universal challenges, uniting young and old and building a sense of shared values.

Finding people willing to be interviewed proved to be relatively straightforward though the local History Society was able to make helpful suggestions. Several locally based journalists came into the school to help provide the pupils with the necessary skills to carry out productive interviews; these were done in ways to suit the interviewees concerned – sometimes in groups, sometimes not. The pupils really enjoyed the experience as shown by the following extract from a thank-you letter from a year 6.

"I was surprised to learn about how many wooden houses have been knocked or burnt down over the years. When I heard about a man who lost his life in a fire I was really shocked and lots of questions started flying around my head. Also it was really interesting to find out about the lock-up and how you used to visit the water pump during the day."

When I visited, all the interviews were "in the can" and Amanda and colleagues were meeting that afternoon with the film-maker they have employed. He is Peter Harmer who runs "Stories – Projects in Film". As well as filming the interviews, Peter has provided workshops within the school aimed at empowering the pupils to contribute practically and creatively to the film. The next steps would include creating animations around the "doorways" concept, showing the "rushes" to the children and talking with them about how the final article will be structured. Amanda hopes that the film will be ready for its premiere before the end of this term (and so before Year 6 leaves). The film will be accompanied by a booklet, also focusing on the doorways, with a double-page spread on each. Funding for the project has nearly all come from the Lottery Awards for All fund which has provided £9,250.

Amanda is convinced that the project has already had benefits not just for the pupils but the community as a whole. The older people involved have thoroughly enjoyed participation and have gained positive images of the young people as a result. The pupils themselves have improved their communication skills and developed a much better understanding of their own community and the people who live in it. Once the film comes out, it's sure to help greatly in bringing local people together and breaking down generational barriers. We'll report in the next issue on how the film has been received.

Where flexibility is the key

Swavesey Village College's "100% Philosophy" aims to ensure that every student achieves their full potential. They were finding that the traditional curriculum worked for 70% of pupils so innovations were needed if the 100% target was to be achieved. **Assistant Principal, Andy Daly** told the editor how they went about this.

Andy explained that back in 2003 it was clear that over 20% of students were de-motivated and underachieving (A* to C was at 69%). The school took its first steps towards an alternative curriculum, including the Youth Award and afternoons at Alconbury Driving Centre, though the ambition was essentially survival until Regional College. The next prototypes included GSCEs in applied business, leisure and science, but none of these were as successful as they should have been because the courses lacked the genuinely hands - on practical experience that the students needed. A real breakthrough came in 2004/05 with adoption of the BTEC Construction course; facilities were created in disused bike sheds and toilets, staff were offered invigorating new opportunities as well - led by Director of Applied Learning Dean Barrass and real belief and quality began to emerge. With these developments Ofsted graded the curriculum as 'outstanding' in 2006.

Parents began to remark on how the curricular opportunities were revitalising their children's commitment to school. A Year 11 Student said (2008)

"It has helped me as I have really enjoyed it and it's the main reason I come to school. I have learnt many new skills such as painting, brickwork, and woodwork. This was the best subject ever that I have ever done at SVC."

Attention now focused on ensuring an even broader and more diverse curriculum with the development of a BTEC course in Hairdressing. The "Reflections" salon provides a very realistic working environment and Andy paid tribute to the efforts of the Instructor, Judith, in developing and embedding this area of the curriculum at the college.

A logical next step was involvement in the 14-19 Diplomas and since last September, the college has offered them in Construction and the Built Environment and Hair and Beauty Studies. By 2013, seventeen diploma lines will be available, with the college working closely in partnership with other schools and colleges in the Cambridge Area Partnership.

Young Apprenticeships are also on the agenda with five students matched for next year and many more likely to follow; Andy believes this is a great curriculum offer for some students. Delivering these options, especially given the financial climate, will mean continuing to work in partnership with other schools and colleges. This has worked well so far and the college has become more adept at monitoring and supporting the achievement of their students who are studying elsewhere. Particularly good relationships have been established with Comberton, Cottenham, Impington and Linton Village Colleges, St Ivo School and Cambridge Regional College.

In order to plan for success, Year 9 students are given clear guidance on the courses they will achieve best in and those that offer them the best chance for progression in the future. Year 9s are offered completely free choice and 96-97% of students generally end up with all four of their first choices.

Recent results demonstrate the success of these initiatives. In 2009 99% of students achieved 5 plus A* - C, with 82% achieving 5A*-C including English and Maths. The impact of this provision is not merely measured in these headline figures but also in the progression, confidence and self-belief of the students who, in realising that they can achieve on a level 2 vocational or applied course, develop the self-esteem to achieve elsewhere in their curriculum at level 2 as well. Andy is also keen to stress that due to the quality of the vocational and applied provision a broader ability range of students now choose to opt for these courses which are becoming increasingly popular with parents, students and staff.

The key messages from the college's experience are summed up as:

- flexibility
- offering relevant and practical experiences
- strong commitment to collaboration
- 100% Ethos
- ownership of and accountability for student achievement.

On the move

New Headships from April 2010

Adrian Shepherd	St Anne's C of E Primary School	Wef April 2010
Kate Dorrell	Dry Drayton	Was appointed during the Spring Term

New Headships from June 2010

Oliver Sharpe	Cambridge Student Support Centre PRU	Wef September 2010

New Headships from September 2010

Alison Anderson	Buckden C of E Primary School	Wef September 2010
Ann Morten	Ridgefield Primary School	Wef September 2010
Sarah Porter	Monkfield Park Primary School	Wef September 2010
Sue Blyth	Payne Primary School	Wef September 2010
Deborah Nicholas	Great Abington Primary School	Wef September 2010
Shirley Stapleton	Ashbeach Primary School	Wef September 2010
Jane Green	Waterbeach Community Primary School	Wef September 2010
Claire Matthews	Great Staughton Primary School	Wef September 2010 (20% from April 2010)
Jonathan Culpin	Sawston Village College	Wef September 2010
Nicola Jones	Mepal & Witcham Primary School	Wef September 2010
Suzanne Carter	The Rackham Primary School	Wef September 2010
Fional McCallum	Elm Primary School	Wef September 2010

Retirements at the end of Spring Term 2010

Lynne Anderson	Monkfield Park Primary School	Retired 30.04.10

Retirements at the end of Summer Term 2010

Sid Wales	The Rackham Primary School	Retiring 31.08.10
Hazel Lambert	Ashbeach Primary School	Retiring 31.08.10
Chris Child	Elm Primary School	Retiring 31.08.10
Sheelagh Partington	Hauxton Primary School	Retiring 31.08.10
Liz Womersley	Fenstanton & Hilton Primary School	Retiring 31.08.10
Jenny Maguire	Coton Primary School	Retiring 31.08.10

Pictures are from **Overhills Primary School**, who had an artist working with them and as part of the project, children in the Yr R/1 class produced these **penguins**.